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# KOHELETH.

A Novel.

BY  
LEWIS AUSTIN STORRS.

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# KOHELETH.

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## CHAPTER I.

### AN ANACHRONISM—TRUMBULL COURT.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife  
They keep the even tenor of their way.

—*Gray.*

IT may seem impertinent for me to enter into an introductory description of New London, county town of New London County, in the virtuous State of Connecticut ; it has such important claims on popular attention that I fear its very respectable residents may frown slightly on any attempts of mine to exploit its reputation. Just as I imagine a really good freak, who had established himself in the dime show business, must regard superciliously the subordinate showman who barks his history for the instruction of the spectators. But—to err is human, as we who studied the Latin Reader learned incidentally with the major fact that the infinitive takes the neuter. It may be there are some who have not been blessed with any positive knowledge about this reputable New England port, and for their sakes I have thought wise to put down a few data concerning it, even at the hazard of giving umbrage to those, whose local pride may resent such minuteness. For



I must charge these latter that though New London has struggled for many years with the qualifying title of a city, the most enthusiastic imagination cannot call it a rushing and populous place, while its peculiar prerogatives to popular recognition are purely collateral to its municipal existence. Moreover, in further justification of myself let me say, I have heard of persons who have lived so long in New York City they have forgotten where Brooklyn is and positively never heard of Jersey. Why then should they not be uninformed of places still more remote?

The New Yorker who goes down to New London sniffs the briny heaviness of the old maritime town, swathes himself in an outing shirt, and sauntering forth with his blackest pipe stuck between his metropolitan teeth, feels that he has reached the frontier of that unenfranchised State known conventionally, with a contemptuous twang on the accent, as "down East." If he stays there a week he will be so saturated with the imbuing saltiness that it is dollars to doughnuts he will go back to the city and bawl to his wife that her peak is luff when she sails forth in all the gigantic grandeur of crinoline expansiveness.

Perhaps you have been down to New London for the annual regatta, or have run into the harbor with the yachts or in the naval service; or you have driven up in a smart rig from Eastern Point or Pequot, past the menacing posts of Trumbull and Griswold. In any case, you have not forgotten the picturesque provincialism and quaint fashion of the little town, as it nestles on the expanding Thames, under the grim shadow of its historic forts. You remember the drawl of its nautical vernacular, that was so charmingly *en rapport* with its sleepy enter-

prise, you recall the stern New England dignity of its composure and the pervading odor of sea-craft that set you talking of forestays and royal sheets as glibly as a bo's'n's mate before you had been there a round day. I am sure you fell in love with the curious old seaboard town at the same time that you smiled at its antiquated fashions.

But perhaps you loved it afar off, in a sort of Platonic way, and did not push your acquaintance to vulgar familiarity, remembering that the old aphorism beginning, "'Tis distance lends enchantment," has a wider application than mountains and landscapes. In fact, it is to be hoped, you were cautious of your intimacy, for romance often depreciates before reality, and your longshoreman with the melodious slang of his craft might fall into a rather loathsome and ribald fellow by association. And if you are a man—men are such very gormands!—a lunch or cigar of local purveyance might dispose you against the place unconvertably. I imagine then you have not urged your acquaintance farther than the town's hostelry, which you are bound to know if you are a sporting man, or possibly Winthrop's Point, where you may have gone to learn the quality of your sporting proclivities. I am sure at any rate you never visited Trumbull Court which is not a thoroughfare to any of the conspicuous events or places of the town and would be wholly out of your way. Perhaps too it is not there to-day, or is very, very changed. To be sure it used to seem as enduring in its unchangeableness as the everlasting hills, but viewed by the perspective of a longer vision, I know it cannot have escaped the universal ravages of time. For the time of which I am writing was a generation and more ago, in the days

of the merchant marine and the whaling service and the good old-fashioned folk, the most of whom have passed on to the city which is in truth unchangeable, eternal in the heavens.

There have been no old-fashioned folk since the Civil War. In a sense that struggle, instead of perpetuating, determined the republic, much as the Civil War in the time of the first Cæsar marked the merger of the Roman republic into the Empire. Not that the United States have become politically an *imperium* in the same sense as Rome became such, not that the war of the rebellion did not by its issue put a wise adjudication on the fundamental law ; of all its effects none was more salutary than its sustaining of federal power. But nevertheless the war was the most punctuating epoch that has marked our history. We have always been rather a commercial than a martial people ; the war did not alter that and yet it changed our whole condition. It was the first probation of our unity, an apocalypse of our power, it conjured the spirit of glory and glamor and triumph. By the issue of Appomattox we passed from a confederacy to a people, from provincialism to the peerage of nations, from frugality into an era of fabulous wealth and enterprise and colonization. The Grand Army came back from Dixie to scatter itself through the nation and dominate its politics and romance for a score of years. The adventure and license of the camp inoculated the body politic, the narrow morality of the fathers was looked at askance ; then entered voluptuousness in the room of prudery, cis-Atlantic religiousness began to debate with exotic rationalism, the municipal corruptionist flourished like a green bay tree, everybody was merry as a marriage bell, and the devil, swinging on his

furnace door, grew a paunch with the spoils thereof. In the midst of jubilation and roseate dreams the former auspices were swept away. There are no old-fashioned people nowadays, none at all.

Trumbull Court—what a quaint, drowsy, delightful place it was! Long years after Lemuel Leete had turned his back on it forever and had learned to hate its name for the bitterness that parodied it, the memory of it, as it had been in the old boyhood days, returned to him like the perfume of frankincense breathed softly from far away. When he had become a vagabond on the earth and the loves, the joys, the dreamy aspirations of his childhood had been crushed by the harshness of maturer life, his heart often went back to the quiet lane and its once familiar scenes where he had spent his better life and known his purest affections, and he was comforted. For it was his home, the one spot in all the world of his nativity, and he could not quite forget the hallowing significance of that fact. Home—what a blessed word it is, how embracing is its eloquence; Sometimes we read in the papers of a prisoner who, in reply to the formal question of the magistrate answers, he is John Doe, without a home. That is the saddest story ever told. No home and he is a criminal—God help him!

In every idiosyncrasy of local orthodoxy, Trumbull Court was high church in comparison with every other portion of the town. It was more drowsy and dignified than any place else, its tenants were more consciously respectable than people on adjacent streets, and they had more inquisitiveness about what went on in each other's houses, which neighborly interest being given practical effect by a habit of clandestine espionage behind front blinds, was of

course a very proper precaution against departures from social decorum and a warrant of associated integrity.

You see the folk of Trumbull Court exercised the prerogatives of American freeholders so conscientiously as to establish beyond a doubt their gentle descent, albeit, under the democratic auspices of nineteenth century degeneration, their escutcheon did not blaze with that convincing glitter that would have been a more impressive but more vulgar patent of their nobility. In fact the heraldry of Trumbull Court had become very much tarnished in all the years it had been knocking around in most unseemly sequestration. But as the lines of the patentees were drawn where crowns and crests were sadly un-negotiable instruments, they never seriously missed the more effulgent tokens of their gentility. After all, what heraldry is more noble than the epitaph of a noble life? Trumbull Court exemplified an honest, hearty manhood and womanhood that are the surest foundations of society, and which have been known to be less conspicuously present in many who proclaimed their worth with more titular extravagance.

Trumbull Court was an anachronism. By its manners, its canons of daily living, its very ritual of respectability, it belonged to a generation that had passed away. Its homely fellowship, its simple living, its almost bigoted prudery of morals, were such as are more commonly associated with the early colonies than with the day and generation of the republic. It was old; old in the years of its age, older yet in the customs that dominated its life. "Ask not why the former times were better than these," says the Preacher, and the people of Trum-

bull Court asked not, for the former times were even as the present.

In this atmosphere of demure age was Lemuel Leete born, in it he formed all the beliefs of his young life, from it he went forth to learn disillusionment in a world that was less generous, less temperate, less kind and honest. From the quiet eddy of the Court, where life and time seemed almost to stand still, so gentle was their flow, he was at last swept forth on the rushing, tumultuous stream of the wide world, where the first article in the catechism of human experience reads: "Time and tide wait for no man."

Trumbull Court was near the water side, and had been laid out, if such a term can be used of its construction, in the early settlement of the town. As the population increased the settlement inevitably expanded from the water front, and the same conditions arose as in all cities of similar development—the newer and higher localities became the favorite places for the better class of residences, and the streets of the old town were relegated to shops, ale-houses, and the homes of fishmongers and the poorer people generally.

Trumbull Court had resisted this influence of deformation. It was only a small street, leading out of the high road at one end and into nothing at the other. Being therefore no thoroughfare, the current of daily activity did not pulse back and forth through it to quicken its sluggish energy and commingle its life with that of the larger organism of which it was a part. Outside there were change and growth, slow, to be sure, but still sufficiently marked to be defined as a tardy response to the progressive and populating spirit of the century. But

here there was no change, no development, no signs of the times. From its tranquil and contented isolation Trumbull Court watched the migration of families to the more upland streets, and only wrapped itself the more snugly in the drapery of its self-satisfied respectability. Reconstruction, progression, the common vicissitudes of life took place without, but in the clannish little community of Trumbull Court no nomadic impulse, no profane encroachment, no eventfulness whatever, disturbed the simple peacefulness of life. The same people lived in the same houses year after year, they went in and out with the same methodical propriety, their several lives formed an undistinguishable equation from twelvemonth to twelvemonth. They never grew any older or any grayer; it seemed they must always have been old and gray, and that they endured in a state of undecaying maturity where there was no friction and fret of the rushing world to wear away their hale vitality. At least, so it seemed to Lemuel when he was a lad among them; so it seemed to him, perhaps hardly less convincingly, when he had become a man, so strong was the impression of childhood upon him. The idea that his father or his grandfather, or Mr. Mullin or Mrs. Doane, or any one else of the neighbors who had attained majority, when his young intelligence was sufficiently developed to make their acquaintance, had once been a boy or girl and played with toys, or rolled and romped, would have been a wholly unmeaning proposition to him at the ripe age of small-clothes when he used to hob-nob with those worthies, if indeed it had more significance to him in maturer years when the subjective parties had demonstrated their mortality, and mutely proclaimed their ages

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from the entablatures in the churchyard. Inductively he argued that they must have been young before they were old ; but the fact seemed so remotely antecedent to his own generation, and so disassociated with the conditions of his own boyhood, that his induction had no realism for him. Consequently the subjects of his reasoning remained as immemorially old as before. He could only think of them as men and women grown.

Lemuel's ideas of the stagnation of natural law in Trumbull Court were of course as erroneous as they were immature. In the knowledge which came with riper experience, he understood that the alchemy of time has no limitations on the hither side of eternity. The antithetical forces of construction and defacement suffer no suspension, local or temporal, though they may vary in intensity and relation. Trumbull Court had no exemption from the modifying effects of a fundamental law. The old folks grew older, and some in the fulness of age at last joined the migration of the majority and passed away. The younger people grew up to manhood and womanhood as the years accumulated upon them, and a new generation arose from them to fulfil the same old human practice of generation and regeneration. But it was all very, very slow. Nature makes but gentle ravages on those who walk in calm observance of her laws, and the mutation was much too gradual for a child's perception. Besides, there was very little change after all. The mantle of the aged passed to the young, the new amalgamated with the old, and there remained that same quiet, dignified seclusiveness that had qualified the place from time immemorial.



## CHAPTER II.

## BIRTH OF LEMUEL LEETE.

Ring out wild bells and tame ones, too !  
Ring out the lover's moon !  
Ring in the little worsted socks !  
Ring in the bib and spoon !  
Ring out the muse ! ring in the nurse !  
Ring in the milk and water !

—*Cable.*

IT was on the fourteenth day of February in the year of grace—oh, never mind what year, it was so long ago—that Trumbull Court experienced one of those mild, innocuous, and perfectly proper sensations that occasionally ruffled its demure tranquillity, the occasion and substance of which excitement were the news that Mrs. Leete of Number 30 Trumbull Court had just presented Mr. Leete of the same address with a bouncing boy. Such an event is always a matter of more than indifferent importance in communities both polite and otherwise, and a legitimate topic of feminine comment ; but in a neighborhood constructed on such relations of personal comity as Trumbull Court, where babies were a thing of only the rarest advent, you may be sure this youngster was a person of no small importance, from the moment his mother's interesting condition was first whispered about until her safe deliverance. Not that he ceased to be regarded with any further attention the moment he became a present instead of a prospective member of society, not at all. But after everyone had seen him and learned it was a boy

and had been told his weight and the circumstances that attended his birth, each of them somehow began to feel a sort of obtrusive realism in his blubbering, matter-of-fact presence that rendered him a little less attractive than he had been when he had offered latitude for some comparative speculation. In fact it must be confessed he began to be frowned on as a sort of interloper, who must be tolerated because he had come into Trumbull Court in the natural way and hence had the sacred claim of birthright to its exclusive masonry, but who would require a great deal of coöperative guardianship from the associated matrons of the Court, that he might grow up in the observance of the canonical proprieties which had been traditionally accepted by the sedate circle into which it was his fortune to be born.

Now whatever mild aspersions this very small and very inoffensive boy may have provoked by his birth—an event, by the way, over which he had no control—they were in no way personal to himself. He was not a bad-looking baby, as babies go, nor a troublesome baby; no one could find any just fault with his looks or manners. To be sure young master Lemuel—for so in the fulness of time he was christened—to be sure, he did cry, and had the common quantum of babyhood ills, and crying was very bad form in Trumbull Court, so was noise of any kind. But his unpopularity was not due to any comparative demerit he might have among babies, but consisted in this—firstly, he was a fact, divested of all the late romance that had attached to him when he had been in a state of uncertainty; and more than that, he was emphatically a growing fact, his future was a problematical quantity about which none of the Trumbull Court dames had any positive

intelligence but a great many forebodings. And the chances, according to these latter were, from all precedent, that when he grew to the mischievous age of a lusty urchin, he would be a very obnoxious fact to every housewife whose nerves loved decency and good order. For the generic small boy fell without the grace of Trumbull Court as a peculiar sprout of the devil.

There used to be a sentence in the Latin Reader which we who have travailed with that excellent primer were wont to translate, "as many minds as men." Now without hurling back contempt on the tutelary pedagogues of our tender years, it must be confessed that if that is what the antiquated moralist meant the infirmities of his wit are to be pitied. In Trumbull Court at least it was rendered, "as many minds as women." In conspicuous evidence of this was the discussion as to what fates presided over Master Lemuel Leete's birth. Most of the feminine ideas that found expression in comparative conclave had this only in common, that they were dubious of any good. The Court was very conservative, and the flavor of its philosophy was decidedly pessimistic on every point except the absolute goodness of its own ethical code. No radical beliefs or Utopian visions had a place there.

Mrs. Mullin, who was a good Catholic, doubted that the young master would come to little good for having been born on a heathen saint's day, though how the poor dear could help it—God bless him!—was more than she knew. As Mrs. Mullin was not of the inner circle of the Court, but lived around the corner, her opinion was disparaged as purely *obiter*.

Mrs. Haffen, who was chiefly remarkable for the variety of her aches and ills and the coördinate

number of nostrums she compounded against them, being from the premises more of a materialist than her Papist neighbor, remarked with argumentative emphasis that the month was February, in which connection she was reminded that an estimable but obscure friend of hers had told her that she had noticed when she didn't die in February she had always lived the year out. Just what relevancy this bit of heresay had to the case at bar does not appear, but as no exception was taken to its admission its competency must have been approved.

In spite of these discouraging forecastings, Master Lemuel did all a robust youngster could to discredit the damaging horoscope that had been cast for him. But his attentive neighbors, who had exploited their gift of prophecy over him, seeing he did not fall a victim to an exemplary attack of croup or other infantile malady, only drew down the corners of their mouths and remarked that Rome was not built in a day, a perfectly irrebuttable answer.

It is desirable thus minutely to set down Master Lemuel's initial status with the housewives of the vicinage, in order that in the unfolding of his career, it may be judged of their credibility as seers, whether they really had any mysterious clairvoyance.

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## CHAPTER III.

## THE PEOPLE OF TRUMBULL COURT.

In a town whose bonnie burnie,  
 Whimpering rowed its crystal flood,  
 Near the road where travelers turn aye,  
 Neat and bield a cot house stood.

\* \* \* \* \*

Down below a flowery meadow,  
 Joined the burnie's rambling line ;  
 Here it was that Howe the widow  
 That same day set up her sign.

Brattling down the brae, and near its  
 Bottom, Will first marvelling sees  
 "Porter, ale, and British spirits,"  
 Painted bright between the trees.

"Godsake, Tam ! here's walth for drinking !  
 Wha can this new-comer be ?"  
 "Hout," quo Tam, "there's drouth in thinking ;  
 Let's in Will, and syne we'll see."

—*Macneil.*

TRUMBULL COURT, as has been said, was not a thoroughfare ; it led out of the highroad at one end and terminated abruptly at the other in a high picket gate, which formed the entrance to an extensive property, known from the name of its owners as Windham House. This estate, which contained the better part of three acres, and was scrupulously enclosed, lay between the end of Trumbull Court and the water side, and so obstructed the street's continuation to any logical terminus.

Number 30, where the Leetes lived, was the last house on the Court, numbering from the turnpike

end, and therefore contiguous to the grounds of Windham House, by which it will appear what a very inconsiderable place Trumbull Court was; indeed it scarcely harbored more than a dozen families in all. The home of the Leetes was a cozy, comfortable, white frame house with a great many ells and very little main part, not making a very large structure withal. It was, perhaps, a little more old-fashioned, a little lower-jointed, a little less pretentious than some of the other houses on the street, but its only difference from them was in degree, for none of them were modern, none of them even remotely grand.

By what system of confusion our New England fathers plotted and conveyed land it would be hard to say, certainly it was something different from the modern plan of city lots and blocks. Number 30 was set a good way back from the street and its yard was a most curiously shaped affair; in front it was only a narrow strip, reaching from the house to the street, in the middle of which was laid a walk of narrow flags, flanked on either side by aromatic shrubs and perennial flowers that made the narrow entrance a little vista of fragrance and beauty in their season. The house was built on a slope so that it was a story and a half in front and two and a half in the rear. The narrow front yard becoming still narrower where it passed the house by a flight of uncertain stone steps, expanded thereafter into a triangular back yard.

Hiram Leete, Lemuel's father, had been born and brought up, if not within, at least on the fringes of Trumbull Court, within whose full fellowship he had abode ever since his marriage. Presumably he was by this token an American, but like the stubborn

apostle of high church who, stemming the tide of evangelistic revival, answered that he was not a Christian because he was an Episcopalian, Hiram Leete never thought of his citizenship as more embracing than the frontiers of Trumbull Court.

At the time of Lemuel's earliest recollections of him he was no longer a young man, but was in what may be called ripe middle age, that debatable ground between the prime of life and its declining, whose frontiers are so uncertain. To be more definite, he could not have been far from fifty, and yet so gently had the years used him that he scarcely showed more than half that age. The temperate, methodical routine of his life had not appreciably diminished the forces of a naturally robust constitution. He was rather above medium size, with a full beard, a kindly expression, and a ruddy though in no sense florid complexion. His voice had a musical sweetness and all his manner was gentle. And yet he did not lack dignity and the character of his sex. Hamlet said of the royal Dane, he was a man ; Hiram Leete's sphere of action was not regal, yet within the compass of his life he was a man.

He was a nurseryman. His flowers were at once his labor and his greatest pleasure ; they were his friends and boon companions, and he loved them as truly as if they had been animate with a reciprocal power of affection. He talked to them as one does to a favorite dog, and they, which we are wont to call senseless things, nodded to him their incensed blossoms and responded with thrifty increase to his nurture. Can it not be that long years of communion with these gentlest of God's creatures had caused him to grow like them in gentleness ?

But, however much Hiram Leete doted upon his flowers, he was not insensible to the practical requirements of life ; rather was he one of those cautiously provident men who not only look but make very sure of their footing before they leap. Carrying out this safe rule of conduct he had not married until late in life, believing that love and thrift were two incompatible things for a poor man. It was not then until, after long years of toil and frugality, he had gathered a little store ahead to meet a possible emergency and had built up the good-will of a supporting if not richly remunerative business ; and when old age was beginning to stare at him from uncomfortably close quarters, that he at last made the adventurous plunge into the responsibilities of family life, which he had always looked forward to and yet had learned to dread more and more the longer the moment was deferred.

Beyond his affection for his flowers, Hiram Leete was not, at least at the time of his married life, an emotional man. The sentence of the divine excommunication, " by the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread," had always had for him a harsh conviction ; the world had given him nothing for which he had not contended with it, and even then he had received in greedy measure. The world was a prosaic fact to him, wherein sentiment was the most uncurrent exchange. He was always kind, always considerate, always scrupulously determined in the integrity of his life ; but whatever more ardent nature he had had in his youth, what dreams of life's sweet felicity, what ideals of romance, they had all been dissipated by the years that had allowed them no fruition. He loved his wife, his fidelity to her was unimpeachable. But the fierce passion of young love, the

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bounding of the hot blood in the veins, the springing energy of fresh manhood, which conjures amorous fantasies and knows no temperance of love—all these which enter truly into the significance of the perfect marriage had been dispelled by the disillusioning and hardening experiences of years. His flowers had been his earliest love, they had been his almoners and comforters when he had had no other, and he loved them most truly, because he gave them all the affection they were able to receive. The warm fellowship of wedded love he could not give because he had it not. There are such things as inconsiderate marriages. A comfortable maintenance is certainly a healthy stimulant of love. But love is something greater than subsistence ; it is a great, sustaining, blessed fact, and unions in which it is not the dominating impulse are negotiations, not marriages.

Harriet Leete it is unnecessary to describe further than to say that she was one of those women who seem sent down from heaven to teach us how lovely holiness can be on earth.

The rest of the family consisted of Lemuel's maternal grandfather, Adonijah Gasser—Daj, Lemuel always called him—and Betsy, Aunt Betsy as she was known, though she had no consanguinity with either the Leetes or Gassers. Betsy had originally been a housekeeper for Adonijah Gasser and from his service had passed into that of his son-in-law when the latter had become a householder and taken the old gentleman under his roof. It has been said she was not of the family proper, but her distinction from it was one merely of pedigree and not of recognition. Presumably she had an ancestral name and that name had a Celtic euphony ; never mind, Lemuel never knew what it was, and it never served her any

useful purpose after her identity became merged in the Leete household. Betsy was Lemuel's nurse from a baby and he never tired of her company. She was a wonderful romancer; she had all the credulity of her race and knew no end of mythical lore. She could tell Irish folk-tales by the hour, and recite the most galloping and unmetrical rhymes about strange creatures and the strange antics of very ordinary creatures, with no end of verses to them and no limitation of extravagant incident. She could tell yarns of the sea that would startle any mariner, legends that discounted every precedent of nature, while the bogie man and all his kindred of unverified folk were particular favorites of hers and could be conjured into any defiance of physical laws on a moment's notice. Poor Betsy had seen but little of this world and her imagination had a latitude that was wholly unbounded by such trifles as possibilities and facts.

Lemuel had but one greater favorite than Betsy and that was Daj. Adonijah Gasser was a man of powerful frame, with square, resolute jaws, a scarred but not unkindly face, and a bluff, hearty, John Bull appearance generally. He had been a gunner in the Royal Navy and had led a wild, adventurous life from a lad, until what with powder and rheumatism and the searching sea air, his pins got too unsteady under him for the service. He and Lemuel, at the antipodes of life, were the greatest of chums. He used to delight to take his little grandson to the blacksmith's shop just around the corner on the high-road, the smithy being a particular friend of his, and perching Lemuel on a fluke of the big anchors that lay by the door, he would sit down near by and tell him stories of battle and sport, of hair-breath escapes

on land and sea that were hardly less harrowing than Betsy's. He did not attempt the same emancipation from the proprieties of fiction as Betsy, who was as likely to sail a ship into a head wind with its yards squared as any other way; Daj was scrupulously exact as to his nautical ritual, but he had reeled in his yarns from so many and remote seas that it is to be feared they were affected by a briny expansiveness when he spun them out again. As Lemuel used to sit perched on the huge anchor, watching the great horses as they were led in and out, listening to the clanking of the iron, the measured blowing of the fires, and the humming undertone of his grandfather's voice reciting of the glories that lay all unplucked out in the great, undiscovered world, he grew impatient of his youth, he longed to be a man and play his part in the notable battle of life. Adonijah Gasser had never quite forgiven his daughter for having so far disregarded ancestral precedent as to splice with a chap who led the spiritless life of a nurseryman, and it was his ambition that Lemuel should choose a more adventurous profession; though he reluctantly confessed that Hiram had made a little better thrift of it in his inglorious industry than he himself had done in the bloomin' service.

The first house on Trumbull Court from the corner of the highroad was a plain, two-story brick building, occupied by an ill-favored and paralytic old widow named Doane. It was a square-cornered, narrow-corniced chunk of a house, coming jut out to the street and anything but picturesque or cheerful in appearance. A long stoop ran along one whole side, facing a narrow alley, and at the street end of this stoop hung a small square swing-sign on which

was represented a man with very long legs, a very thin body and a lantern face, seated at a round table contemplating a mug of frothing beer. This libel was courteously understood to be Governor Trumbull, nomenclural patron of the Court and fraternally known as Brother Jonathan. He seemed to be making mental calculations whether his very attenuated body could stretch to the yeasty proportions of the beer before him and to be middlin' dubious, to use the vernacular of the Court, about making the probation. From his very yellow stockings to his very red face he was a most gorgeous chap; in a martial town he would have been regarded as a composite for every arm of the service. But the glory of his nether gear was eclipsed, in the opinion of the Court, by the cocked hat that surmounted the make-up, and from which Mrs. Doane's derived its name. Now this cocked hat, of continental correctness, certainly opened the suspicion that the obscure artist, who was guilty of the whole tawdry caricature, had started out to paint the gaudy gentleman on a bigger scale than he could carry through, or perhaps than the profits in paint warranted, and so had tapered him off as he worked downward, something like a peg-top. But Trumbull Court, sniffing indignantly at the idea of deformity in its household gods, spoke insinuatingly about moles and dunderheads and declared, of course the hat was intended for the gaudy gentleman's coronation after he had drunk the beer, when he would fit it exactly. By this understanding, Mrs. Doane's brew, in defiance of the general law of gravitation, must have had the quality of settling up instead of down, which perhaps it had.

Mrs. Doane's was not a tavern in the strict sense, the Court had no need of such an institution, for it

did not cater to the transient custom. It would be hard to say just what Mrs. Doane's was. Some time before Lemuel's day, she had leased and moved into the little house at Number 3 Trumbull Court. The front room on the ground floor and the upstairs rooms she let to lodgers, by which she managed to pay the rent and have a home for herself in the three rooms that were left in the down-stairs back. She was all alone in the world at the time she came, and the rooms she occupied were more than she needed, had they too been available for letting. A foot-alley, as has been described, ran by the long porch, making a short cut to the highroad, and the location was more in touch with the outer world than the houses farther up the Court.

It soon began to appear that Mrs. Doane was a very genial dame and her house a very convenient place. First, the lodgers took to dropping in of an evening at the little back parlor for a chat with their landlady, at which times they never lacked for a mug of good ale and a bit of cold relish to go with it. Then the people who lived just through on the highroad, began to sniff the good ale and the cold relish, and the succulent flavor of Mrs. Doane's hospitality, and they too dropped in. Pretty soon the folks in the Court, who had been looking askance at this profane encroachment within their borders, decided the best way to meet it was by contesting the baked meats on even ground. So they also came to tap the ale and good things that went around. Mrs. Doane's ideas of hospitality remained unchanged by her increasing popularity, but her impecunious circumstances prevented her dispensing it to so many guests. Thus the "Cocked Hat" grew into a sort of public house, with a select patronage of two

blocks, and the trade of dispensing entertainment to her callers made the old lady a welcome addition to the income derived from the lodgers.

During the day the "Cocked Hat" was as quiet as the most decorous house in the Court, for Mrs. Doane had her own work to do and she expected everyone else to have theirs. But when evening came, the neighbors began to drop in. Sometimes there would be half a dozen, sometimes twice as many. If they wished a draught of the ale, as most of them did, or a trifle from the pantry, they had it and paid for it; if they wanted nothing they were just as welcome. The personal hospitality of the place never became the hospitality of the public house. Whoever came, came in a social way, as Mrs. Doane's friend.

Betsy, as a particular friend and remote kinswoman of Mrs. Doane, often of an evening when her work was done, used to drop down to the "Cocked Hat," to exchange respects with her neighbors. A good tap of beer is a great unburdener of the heart, and there was sure to be a good joke or a fresh bit of gossip that was worth going down to hear, if one would be abreast of the times.

When Lemuel grew to an age and dignity to be allowed to sit up after supper like grown folks, it used to be his delight to go with Betsy on these evening visits. This was a matter of some democratic tolerance on the part of his parents; for though all Trumbull Court dwelt in a sort of fraternity, still, there were degrees of honor even within its narrow limits, and residence grew more respectable as you approached the upper end. By this token Mrs. Doane, living in the first house from the turnpike, and, therefore, associating more or less with the un-

circumcised around the corner, being herself also an exotic of undefined antecedents, was socially accredited only with a reservation. She must be recognized because she numbered on the Court, but she would be promptly ignored if she should move to another block. Lemuel, however, not having arrived at an appreciation of these social niceties, found Mrs. Doane's low-jointed and dingy back parlor with its sanded floor and anything but luxurious accommodations a very attractive place. There was always present in it a peculiar odor, that smelt like nothing in particular, and a great many things in gross, as if the persistent flavor of numberless cabbages and other delicacies, that for many years had been boiled in the adjoining kitchen, was contending for supremacy with the more vapping fumes of the brew and tobacco. This abiding emphasis of fragrance might have been offensively strong to a very refined nostril, and have induced coughing in young ladies of delicate sensibilities, had any such young ladies ever visited Mrs. Doane's. But no such young ladies ever did, and the folk of Trumbull Court had stomachs too stout to take offense at an aroma which was the apotheosis of such succulent delicacies, even though it had grown stale by keeping. To Lemuel the peculiar fragrance of the stuffy little parlor, which was ventilated only by a stuffy little court, seemed part of the goodwill of the old dame's hostelry, as much as the reputed quality of her ale or the sign of the cocked hat on the porch. In the vernacular of the law, the smell was something *ferae naturae*, which, naturally volatile, Mrs. Doane had domesticated and appropriated by long confinement. Mrs. Doane's bright and breezy, Mrs. Doane's done over in ivory and

gilt, with candelabra and tapestries and sensuous breath of sweet perfumes—that would not have been Mrs. Doane's at all, and the poor widow, could she have afforded such refurbishments, would have lost all her patronage; just as a Roquefort cheese, which had not reached the creeping age, would be indignantly repudiated by your epicure, as a fraud upon his epicurean stomach, or as your choice ptarmigan is more esteemed according to the emphasis with which it announces its untamed pedigree across the dining-room.

A big haircloth sofa with a most ill-padded seat extended along one side of Mrs. Doane's parlor, and here Lemuel used to sit between Betsy and one of the marvelously carved arms, his small legs sticking out straight before him, and scarcely reaching beyond the edge of the gaunt piece of furniture, listening with might and main to the babble of conversation about him, though it was no more comprehensible to him than the theology of Mr. Smallneck's sermons of a Sunday. He was sure, however, in one case as in the other, that there must be a great deal of profound wit and wisdom in it, coming from such old heads. Mr. Mullin particularly, was a poser to his small intelligence. He was a big, red-faced man, with a deep, gruff voice—they said he had a fog in his throat from being so long at sea—and a loud, guttural laugh with which he always embellished his stories. Many a time he laughed so hard, he laughed the fire out of his pipe. He had been a whaler until his joints grew too stiff to pursue the festive blubber, and drove him to a lubber's life. He used to creak when he sat down, like an adjustable doll, but whether it was really his bones that creaked, or his shirt front, or whether it was only an eructa-



tion of fog from his throat, cannot be affirmed at this late day, so long has he lain in the bosom of his Mother Earth. He used to talk a great deal about "wenches," and rolled his eyes and smacked his big red lips at the women as if he would come and chuck them under the chin, as he did in his palmier days, if that creak in his timbers had not put an embargo on his friskiness; after which amorous contortions, he would scowl jocosely at his wife, a lantern-jawed dame who had not been able to put much flesh on her bones from the benefits of her thirty years' coverture, and very likely did not quite fulfil the female affinities of the merry captain. Mr. Mullin used a great many strange expressions in his speech, and when Lemuel asked Betsy what they meant, she said they were whale talk, and not meant for small boys to understand, which did not in any way allay his interest to know their meaning. Sometimes he thought he would ask his mother, but he did not like to do that, he feared she might not let him go to Mrs. Doane's any more, if he did.

How he used to try to have all the dignity of a grown up man when he went to Mrs. Doane's! But his most heroic efforts never carried him through an evening. As one pipe after another began to glow in sociable warmth and the mugs went round faster and frothier, the narcotic spell that hung on the fringe of the convivial spirit would creep drowsily into his head. The air would grow bluer and all the people would look very far off and grotesque in the smoke clouds. The conversation would sink to an indistinguishable and far-away chatter, in which mingled the deep voice of Mr. Mullin now and then, like a big bassoon in a fife corps. Then, from trying to watch the people, Lemuel would begin to dream

out stories from the kaleidoscopic transparencies on the green paper lampshade. The curly headed boy, sitting cross-legged, was always Hugh, his particular friend; the girl with dark, waving hair was little Susie, the long, thin boy standing up was himself, and the sweet angel-faced girl who held the thin boy's hand, who was she? some fairy doubtless whose destiny was allied to his own, and whom he should know some day—at present she was his *Dulcinea del Toboso*, the mistress of his chivalrous little heart, yet unrevealed.

Thus he would spell out fancies for himself from the old-fashioned boys and girls in the pictures, till the curly headed boy began to look very much like the long thin boy and the laugh and the jest of the assembled bibbers sank into a crooning monotone. And then he would fall over into Betsy's lap with a lurch and know no more till he felt someone shaking him very hard, and looking up would see Betsy, very large and ogress-like, looking down at him and saying it was bed-time.

## CHAPTER IV.

MASTER HUGH GILES.

Of all the girls that are so smart  
There's none like pretty Sally.  
She is the darling of my heart,  
And she lives in our alley.  
There is no lady in the land  
Is half so sweet as Sally,  
She is the darling of my heart,  
And she lives in our alley,

When she is by I leave my work,  
I love her so sincerely ;  
My master comes like any Turk,  
And bangs me most severely.  
But let him bang his bellyful,  
I'll bear it all for Sally,  
For she's the darling of my heart,  
And she lives in our alley.

—*Carey.*

MRS. DOANE was not what you might call a jovial and well-fed mine-host ; on the contrary, she suffered the imputation of being scrawny and ill-shapen ; for she had traveled no path of roses through life, and had had to give more thought to keeping soul and body together, than to the refinements of their partnership. Still she had kept a merrier heart than many who have fared better with the world, and her genial, whole-souled kindness, despite her ill-favored body, made her very popular among all her kith and neighbors.

Her family, outside her lodgers and patrons, all of whom liked to consider themselves under some rela-

tion to her, consisted of one small protégé named Hugh Giles, whose pedigree Trumbull Court had scanned and developed into the following circumstantial narrative; although Mrs. Doane herself had maintained a positive and unverifying reticence concerning the whole matter, which was natural considering the circumstances, and only went to prove the Court's demonstration.

It would seem then that about the time of her advent into the Court, Mrs. Doane had had a nephew who, having been left an orphan at an early age, had fallen, rather inevitably than welcomely, it was said, into her ward, and had there grown up with such moderate benefits and discipline as she could afford him, until, having reached an age where he found her roof too confining for his budding genius, he had struck out for himself, with no unseemly deluge of tears on either side. But all that was history before Mrs. Doane's introduction to the Court.

It happened that this nephew was a handsome, open-handed fellow of many good parts, and being smart and up to snuff, as they say, he did not make such very bad shift of it. But he was hopelessly impulsive and reckless, and his tastes had the misfortune of being too prodigal for his fortunes, under which circumstances, it may be judged, he was not long in getting to the end of his rope and tumbling off into that yawning void which swallows up so many of his sort, much to the relief, be it known, of certain collateral relatives to whom he had been an abiding menace lest he should become a family charge. He married a girl of easy respectability, as the shortest way of smoothing over some of his past pleasantries. Young Master Giles, it was said, was the prompt response to these nuptials; in fact, had

he not hastened the coming, he might have found the domestic economy rather disturbed for the reception of company.

It would seem that shortly after seeing their several and united fortunes vested in this heir apparent, Mr. and Mrs. Giles worked out the demonstration that the married state is not what it is cracked up to be, for it was not long before the father disappeared; some said he died, others that he committed suicide, which came to much the same thing; others that he had fled to some outlandish place to be rid of a bad wife. Whatever was the manner of his exodus, his wife did not waste much time with her weeds, but went off in a like mysterious manner, presumably to the devil, in the opinion of all right-minded people.

Here was a state of things, to be sure. The young master was not old enough to do much house-keeping on his own account, and had no alternative but to go and live with his great-aunt. Mrs. Doane did not accept the alternative with any better grace than she had accepted his parent, but as there was no one else to take the youngster, she could not go back on her own flesh and blood, and she was not long in becoming fond of the little waif.

Such was the genealogical tree which the archæologists of Trumbull Court built for Master Hugh Giles, infant, in chancery to Catharine Doane, widow, when without any by-your-leave or passport whatsoever, they suddenly discovered him ensconced in their midst, making himself so much at home, withal, that there was no telling how long he had been there before their dormant faculties had scented him.

As Lemuel grew to boyhood, Hugh became nat-

urally, almost inevitably, his especial playfellow. There were not many boys and girls in the Court, and the few it boasted were too old for Lemuel's association. From the standpoint of their superior years he had no recognition whatever. True there were boys enough to be found, of all sorts and descriptions, without going very far away. The gangway just around the corner of the highroad, which reached back irreverently close to the backyards of the Court's residents, and which was the only local coasting place in winter, fairly swarmed with them during its season; the yard of the blacksmith's shop, which was encumbered with old débris and burdock bushes and hence was a favorite retreat for numberless cats, had enticements for those who were sportively disposed. But these boys lived on other streets and their gentile shrieks rasped on the ears of the Court matrons. Lemuel had a sort of easy comradeship with this rabble, but Hugh was his intimate and confidant. He should never like anyone else so well, he was sure he never should.

Just around the corner from Trumbull Court on the highroad, and connected with the Court by the foot-alley that ran by Mrs. Doane's porch, was a little, low-jointed, narrow-corniced building of antiquated design. It stood squarely out to the street and its two squatty stories, surmounted by a high gambrel roof with huge dormers, gave it a very bumptious appearance, as if it thought it were really a thing of beauty and value, instead of looking like a hideous Spanish galleon bottom upward. In explanation of this air of importance it is only necessary to say that here was that desideratum of ever rightly constructed New England neighborhood, the corner grocery. True this grocery did not happen to

be on the corner, but that is of no significance. The corner grocery is an institution of established recognition ; it stands for thrift, integrity, and social honor, its economic functions are vastly greater than the purveying to our appetites, as everyone knows. The etymology of its name has been lost in this larger significance and it has become rather matter of description than location, so that one may as truly keep a corner grocery in the middle of a block as at a cross-roads. Furthermore, if Mr. Mullin's house suffered any disadvantage from its inside location it did what it could to compensate by having the private alleyway which led to Trumbull Court on the rear, and which gave a sort of hold upon the respectability and incidentally the custom of that exclusive neighborhood.

Now if Mr. Mullin had conducted a traffic in what is known as wet goods, this alleyway might have been regarded as a convenience of rather suspicious good to Trumbull Court, like the conventional family entrance, which is so much in favor in our cities. But Mr. Mullin carried nothing in the wet line more stimulating than milk, and this had the reputation among those who tried to raise cream therefrom, of being none too stimulating for the price. The respectability of Trumbull Court moreover would have found no measure for its indignation at the suggestion that it resorted to such gross alimentary methods at the back-door passage of cans. Thus the honor of Trumbull Court stands unimpeached despite the alleyway.

Mr. Mullin's alley was a great institution in every way. It ran by Mrs. Doane's stoop and so saved the old gentleman many a turn on his evening visits ; but chiefly it enabled him, if not exactly to stand

within the synagogue of the Court, to at least stand in the outer Court of their recognition. However, as it is an incident of our human affairs that every benefit carries its disadvantages, Mr. Mullin's alley was no exception. Not only was it dark and narrow, but it was slanting with a slant all its own; and when the winter rains congealed themselves delusively over the flags and Mr. Mullin's patrons, being deceived thereby, addressed him in true Catilinian fashion from their humbled positions. Mr. Mullin sighed a weary sigh and cast his eyes ruefully at the corner tenement, wondering if it would ever be his. But he had wondered that so often and his conviction that the ultimate fatality of the corner was a grocer's shop had received so many checks that he was beginning to resign himself to the conclusion that the conversion of the corner to its proper use would never be in his day.

The fact was the coveted angle had been preempted by a sour and seedy undertaker many years before. He had not been sour and seedy then, but as sleek and plump a sexton as might officiate at any obsequies. But hard times had cast on him that lean and hungry look. The hypothetical profits that had tempted him into the neighborhood had never been capitalized, and the Trumbull Court folk had shown such obtuseness to the benefits offered in his line that he had been growing more dilapidated each year since he set up his shop at the corner stand. The balance of trade had been terribly against him; all the cerements he had brought in stock had grown worthless by lapse of time, and the unearned increment of his profession, by which happy irony he was wont to define the venerable folk of the vicinage, continued so obstinately in the



flesh that sometimes he contemplated officiating on his own behalf and withdrawing from this mundane sphere altogether. But an animus against his prospective clientage, who persisted in living at his expense, and also a praiseworthy professional pride, lest the embalmer's art should perish from a locality where there was so little to encourage it, restrained him from such a vanquished retirement. And when old Sam Mullin, seeing the sexton's cadaverous look, rubbed his hands and thought, " 'twon't be long afore I have that corner lease," the sexton chuckled a grim, funereal chuckle at his neighbor's glee; and as he tweaked the joints of his long fingers he vowed he'd stay on the hither side of the ground long enough to bury Sam Mullin, if he had to hypothecate every casket and weed in his stock to extend his term.

But it was nip and tuck if he did it; and though as time went on, everyone admitted that the sexton was an "uncommon sticker for a skinny chap," they all confidentially predicted he would be worsted in the end and that Sam would gather in the spoils. For Sam Mullin had passed into a by-word in the neighborhood as expressively as that other Sam, surnamed Hill, to whom he was locally supposed to be related. As emphatically as Sam Hill stood for superlative violence, so Sam Mullin was the denominative of eternal lethargy. Which happened in this wise:

According to all rumor, Sam had been a rough-and-tough old sea-dog in his time, a report which was certainly borne out by his battered appearance when he swapped the sea for lubber's lodgings and the vending of grocer's wares. At that time it was supposed he was pretty well played out, and he was

confidently expected to shamble promptly off the deck of human affairs altogether. Played out for sea-going he undoubtedly was, for his timbers creaked and the fog in his throat had grown beyond the dispelling potency of ship's grog. Played out in enterprise he seemed to be too, by the easy grace with which he allowed his wife to assume the brunt of the business. But played out for a home in a comfortable place he demonstrated he was not. So taking from the prow of his ship the figurehead which had grown battered and unseaworthy as himself, and nailing the wooden urchin over the door of his shop as an insignium of its good-will, he prepared to spend the aftermath of his life under the little fellow's tutelary benison, smoking long pipes, drinking good ale, and racking the feelings of his black-clothed neighbor, and therewith of all his neighbors, by his defiance of all precedents in ailments. For Sam began to be taken sick at all sorts of times. At these seasons the neighbors would call, and receiving discouraging news of his condition would condole with his family and go away with lugubrious decorum ; the doctor declared there was no hope, and the priest doled out his consolations to the prospective widow ; after which ceremonious discounting of his future old Sam always suddenly revived and went forth in the flesh to confound his expectant obituists, with a grin of gruesome satisfaction on his face and, the profane insisted, an odor of brimstone in his clothes.

Sam's professional neighbor on the corner, like everyone else, had formerly been deceived by these remittent indications of a mortuary intent, and on one occasion, being despondent from very idleness and hearing that Sam's attack was uncommonly severe, he

ventured to take time by the forelock and give a more cheerful aspect to his books of account, by charging up on the credit side of his ledger an itemized bill to be rendered to Sam's administrator, the name being left blank to await probate proceedings. But Sam had come up again with his usual buoyancy and the sexton lost a pound of flesh, which he could ill afford to spare, by reason of the shock and the sleep he lost sitting up for the announcement of a different event. Thus it came to be a proverb thereabouts, in speaking of anything of remote and contingent possibility, to say, "Oh, yes, but that will be when Sam Mullin dies."

Sam Mullin's was a place of no little domestic importance in the life of Trumbull Court. It was so easy to drop in there for a purchase of something you forgot to order of your regular grocer, and Sam was always sure to know a bit of news if there were any. Besides Sam was such a genial fellow. Even the people at the upper end of the Court, who only recognized the grocer apologetically, used to send their children down on errands if there was a rumor afloat of a local happening which they wished to verify. Mr. Mullin's was not quite such a valuable dispensary as Mrs. Doane's, and being without an ale tap did not furnish the same sociability. But Mrs. Doane had no time for entertainment except evenings; and besides, it was not in good form among the more exclusive to patronize Mrs. Doane's.

If Trumbull Court recognized Mr. Mullin's, to Lemuel it was a place of preëminent attractions. He was pretty sure to find his way down Mullin's alley whenever he was tempted by the concomitant facts of a penny in his pocket and a taste for candy in his mouth. It was in these side-trips he learned

his first lesson in diplomacy. For Sam Mullen, despite his very generous qualities of ale bibbing, was never known to be extravagant in anything else but his yarns. He squeezed his measures as tightly as, it was said, he used to squeeze the wenches; and he squeezed his dollars till the poor eagles screamed in agony to be let go. If there was a broken stick of candy in the jar, Lemuel was sure to get it, which he considered a very unequivalent exchange for value rendered. It did not take many of these short-weight purchases to convince Lemuel that old Sam was no man for him to deal with. So when he went down on business bent, and saw the old skinflint's glossy head shimmering through the door, he lingered patiently about, like the lamb of epic story, till the old nob dozed off and Mrs. Mullin took her place at the counter. She was not so unsusceptible to his blandishments—poor soul! she probably got few enough where they were due—and always gave him a whole stick of candy for his money; and if there happened to be a broken piece in the jar, sometimes she threw that in. There were few women whose virtues Lemuel admired as he did Mrs. Mullin's.

“Who can find a virtuous woman?” asked the wise man, “for her price is far above rubies.” Sam Mullin had found such a woman in Mrs. Mullin; and if he never attempted to put her valuation in rubies, not being particularly familiar with such things, he fully appreciated her merits as Mrs. Mullin. Not only was she a helpmate and a worthy though silent partner in the grocery business, but she had given eight proper scions to the name of Mullin—a fact which her husband regarded in no way a secondary virtue. But from the fact that the paternal roof,

though large and gambreled, did not enclose a vast amount of living space, and for the further reason that the revenues of the grocery business were not large, it had been a custom in the Mullin household for the children to become producers at an early age. Some had married, some were at sea, some, alas ! had died and would return no more home. Little Susie, so called to distinguish her from her mother who was big Susie, was the only one left at home ; she was the pet of her parents, the child of their old age, their Benjamin of love. Little Susie was as sweet and beautiful a child as ever blessed the marriage of peasant or prince. There seemed to go forth from her, child though she were, an infection of beauty and happiness and love that made all the world seem better and lovelier where she was. Her merry laugh, her bright eyes, her gentle affection for every creature, her childish innocence and faith—who could resist the charm of this wee angel of peace and goodness ! Certainly not Lemuel. Little Susie was a name to him for all that was best on earth. But he never thought of appropriating any of her attractions to himself. That would have been disputing title paramount. All her beauty was for Hugh, all her charms his especial patronage. Hugh had always been her champion and had exercised a prerogative of guardianship over her which resented any rivalry among her other playfellows. He would walk by her carriage when Mrs. Mullin rolled her out, as proud and gallant as a major ; and when she grew older and could play and romp about, he assumed a protectorate over her far disproportionate to his seniority. Lemuel never thought of questioning this relation, which seemed to him the most natural thing in the world. Lemuel's admiration for little

Susie was of the dispassionate, altruistic sort which the best man may feel for the bride who is to be given to his friend. So implicitly had he disposed her to Hugh, so unnatural did any other disposition seem, that he never thought of associating her destiny with his own. Perhaps if he had not grown up in the recognition of this other affinity, little Susie might have flaunted her coaxing charms in many of his boyish dreams and caused his heart to pit-a-pat troublesomely in his breast ; perhaps when he grew to an age when he began to feel the sap of manhood stirring in his thin blood, and to see beyond the simple images that had bounded his little horizon some faint glimpses of the passions that denizen the wider world, he was less generous in his abnegation of all her winsomeness ; perhaps the conjunctive fatality of her life and Hugh's seemed less positive and less good when the encroaching knowledge of age began to knock down the simple puppets of childish faith and set in their places the less beautiful accidents of real life. But if any such defection ever came to make little Susie less impersonal to him, it came discreetly. If he began to doubt the divine paramountcy of Hugh's preëmption, there was something in little Susie's dark eyes and the way she tossed her black, wavy hair, so very suspicious of what, if she had been old enough, would have been called coquetry, that it would have been sufficient in itself to terrify sober-minded and bashful Lemuel from any overt act of disseizin. Besides which coercive fact, it must be confessed he had a wholesome regard for Hugh's views in the premises, who was a year older than himself, and the probable result of questioning the soundness of those views.

Lemuel used to wonder why the earth patch by

Mr. Mullin's door was the only lucky place for playing mibs, and why every itinerant boy of the "av'-noo," who strayed by with his pockets full of marbles, was as favorable to its merits as Hugh and he. Could it have been because it was near little Susie, that her voice could be heard from the store, or from her chamber up in the grim dormer overhead ; and sometimes she would come and watch them at their play ? He used to have just a suspicion that little Susie was the secret of its popularity, for really there were better places for scientific mibs.

Ah, Sam Mullin's, pleasant Sam Mullin's ! There were more resources in your crazy corners than all your little stock in trade could furnish. And the trodden walk in front, and your tortuous alley, what haunts of sport they were when Lemuel was a lad, so many years ago ! When the years had carried him out into the hurly of life its visions often came back to him as one of the sweet traditions of the past.

It is Saturday afternoon, half-holiday. The modicum of traffic that at the busiest hours scarcely disturbs the perennial quiet of the solemn old town, has subsided into a Sabbath calm, and all the air the "solemn stillness holds" of peace. Over the door is the sign, "Sam Mullin, Grocer," painted in white letters on a blue ground. The storms of winter and summer for many seasons have been as effectual in bleaching out this insignium of the old man's trade as they have in doing the same by his poll. Every year the white has become bluer, and the blue more pale and indistinct, till it is evident that before many years the old man's name will be erased from its place altogether. Below the sign, on the middle of the lintel, is the chubby urchin that had once

sailed at the peak of the captain's cutwater. The little cnap's bulging cheeks and stumpy features are sadly streaked by the rains that have dripped on him from the eaves and the fading sign above during all the years he has watched benevolently over the good-will of the house of Mullin. But he is no less merry and no less plump for his long vigil, and he listens no less heartily to the tinkle of the bell that tells the cusomers who pass in and out, in and out, by the door beneath.

The door is open to-day, and the exuding odor of grocer's stuffs that always haunts the place, comes stealthily forth and hangs on the sleepy air. The vulgar might sniff and suggest cockroaches, but that is a slander which it is not worth refuting. The earth patch by the door, newly stirred by the volutions of countless peg-tops, sends up a rich, earthy smell; while just above, the show-window, with its small, ogling panes of glass, discloses the jars of tawdry-colored candies ranged temptingly within, fairly iridescent in the slanting sunlight, except where they are pied with a suggestion of fly-specks which it is to be feared are genuine, for the house of Sam Mullin, Grocer, does not turn over its stock very often. A demonish black cat, her paws curled up in true feline fashion, is purring hoarsely from the top of a cracker barrel, as if she had a jig-saw in her larynx; and close beside her, in a wood-bottomed chair, his glossy old head tipped over to one side, sits the stolid Sam himself, jaunting obliviously through the Land of Nod and belching out wheezy utterances through the fog of his nether regions.



## CHAPTER V.

## “WINDHAM HOUSE” AND BETSY’S STORY.

A savage place ! as holy and enchanted  
As ever beneath a waning moon was haunted  
By woman wailing for her demon lover.

—*Marco Polo.*

AS has been said, Trumbull Court was only a spur from the highroad. It ended abruptly at no very great distance from its beginning in a high-picketed gate which reached almost across its whole width and marked the entrance to what was known in the neighborhood as Windham Close. Why the street had been allowed to end so stupidly without fulfilling any purposes of a thoroughfare when a projection of a few rods would have brought it to the water front and with the erection of suitable terminal structures of wharfage have made the Court of some commercial utility, does not appear. Whether the condemnation of the property impediment to its extension was too expensive, or the proprietor had that seductive magic known vulgarly as a “pull,” or whether the abrupt termination was merely one of the oddities of municipal projectors and so capable of no rational explanation, for which last idea indeed there seems much warrant of example, is of little consequence and never engaged the attention of the residents. It was a maxim of unquestioned infallibility in the Court that whatever is is right. Far be it from them to revise the precedents of a buried generation or upset the ancient landmarks. As long as the one-ended condition of the Court allowed them

to live on in their backwater tranquillity they saw nothing at all ridiculous in the municipal chart.

Windham Close was an estate of perhaps three acres, mostly overgrown, especially on the landward side, by pines and dark-foliaged trees. It was defended from trespass and erosion on the water front by a rip-rap wall, and on the land side was guarded by a tall, close-picketed fence, within which was planted, except at the big gate, a hedge-row of dwarf trees. Its security from intrusion and curious spying was perfect. Situated as it was within the enfolding restfulness of the Court which divided it from the shuffling tread of traffic that went lazily to and fro in the city streets without, it was, if such a figure may be tolerated, a very *sinus in sinu*, whither even the gentlest ruffle that marred the ocean of human activity never reached. The water plashed merrily along its outfending rocks, the birds sang in the high branches of the great trees, the black ants climbed up and down the furrowed trunks plying the ceaseless industry of their teeming colonies, daisies and dandelions in their seasons bespeckled the long, unkempt grass. Nature was as gay and the light as bright in the daytime within the tall pales of Windham Close as anywhere else in the world. But no human voices ever woke the echoes of its dismal seclusion, no toilers but those scurrying ants ever wrought with the rank confusion of nature. Desolate and deserted it had been for many, many a year, and the big white house away down by the water-side, showed ghastly and spectral through the intervening foliage, like a mausoleum of its own departed glory.

And yet there were denizens of the sombre enclosure and tenants of the great, grim house, at least so it was said, who never had and never would desert

it, but whose presence made it never the less desolate. And when the sullen shadows of night settled heavily among the trees, these strange fiefes of Doom House held unhallowed consort in its sepulchral chambers or strayed malignly through its grounds. What manner of people they might be and what were their muniments of title was a matter of some disagreement in the vicinage, perhaps because they possessed the impish quality of changing their manifestations to suit the seasons. Or may be they were really a motly lot and the several deponents who had declared against them had seen different members of the unholy crew, for unholy they were by all concurrence and had come into their remainder by title not recognized by the conveyancers. And whoever they were and whether they wore colors or cowl, it was certain they were a very airy folk, for they never trod down the long grass by their passage nor left any mark of their meandering in evidence when the sun arose brightly in the morning.

Often when Lemuel's parents believed him snug in bed he used to go to peep through the shutters of his window that looked over into the grounds, on the chance that he might see these sinister people, and then draw back half in fright lest he should see them. But though he often heard noises among the trees, and sometimes thought he saw queer shadows moving with phantom lightness through the shrubbery, he never felt sure he had seen the spirits of Doom House ; and if they really played at leap-frog down the long drive that led from the big picket gate, as it was said they did, he never witnessed their gambols, and their tread was so soft that it never sounded up to the window of his sentry chamber.

However he never doubted they were there, for he had heard of them too often at Mrs. Doane’s.

Windham Close had originally been purchased and laid out by one Peter Windham, a sometime naval officer, who had seen service and had by some means, whether by inheritance or reprisal does not appear, come into the possession of a liberal fortune. He had a military bearing, a fat paunch, a round, red face, and a bluff, hearty manner that signified at once the soldier and the merry gentleman. He had purchased Windham Close for his country seat ; and for that he was a very jolly gentleman and wished his country seat to be as jolly as he was, he built a huge house, after the monumental architecture of his day and named it Doom House, in gentle irony of the uses to which it should be put. Old Peter’s renown and the manner of his merry household had been faithfully handed down in the lore of Trumbull Court. The magnificance of his equipages, the prancing of his horses, the liveries of his grooms, the crest of his harnesses ; the beautiful women—alas !—in rich dresses, who rode with him, the men with fierce mustachios who squired them, and last and greatest, Sir Peter himself, with his jolly swagger and loud bull laugh, cracking his whip and swearing lustily, as the great picket gate flew open and his coach and four burst into the Court at a rattling pace, bringing every proper housewife to her window to blush for those gay ladies, who would find but too sure a sealing of their destinies in Doom House—these were family tales in Trumbull Court, though most of those who had seen the pageants of those days had passed the way of old Peter himself long ago.

Peter Windham, notwithstanding he had been a

roistering fellow, and notwithstanding the company he entertained at Doom House was conspicuous rather for its merriment than its orthodoxy, had been a very popular man with Trumbull Court, partly because he had that generous good humor that could not help commending itself, but chiefly for the amount of gossip for which he made provocation. And it is to be feared that more than one damsel of the Court, who was as chaste as Cynthia herself, jotted down a fashion note while gazing at those "scarlet women" who were fed with the wine of old Peter Windham.

Peter Windham had died, leaving two sons and one daughter, him surviving, and the property in question had passed by devise to the eldest child, Philip, with a contingent limitation over to the other son, John. Philip having died before the expiration of the limitation, the remainder vested in John under the devise absolutely. Trumbull Court never knew much about this John Windham. It was said he led an adventurous life like his father and was as easy a moralist, but was not so merry and not so freehanded. But all the rumors concerning him were very vague. He never visited Doom House and seemed to have no interest in his ownership of the property which was not a readily convertible asset. He died intestate, leaving one son, Maurice, his sole issue, him surviving. To this son, then, at his majority, Doom House with the land thereto belonging, passed by inheritance. This bit of patrimony, however, seemed to be in as little favor with Maurice as with his immediate ancestor; he visited the place once to see if any of his paternal grandfather's relics could be turned into more negotiable stuff, and finding them pretty much dead horse, and that the hypothecation

of the whole establishment would only raise a ridiculous figure, he cursed roundly, 'tis said, the shades of his prodigal *atavus* and his women and went away in a huff. Consequently, Trumbull Court knew about as much of Maurice Windham as it had of his father. Such undemocratic manners, it is needless to say, were not in favor in the Court, and begat a particular animus against Maurice, as they had against John Windham. It was passed about that he was a wild and reckless fellow, that all the wickedness of the Windham stock was in him unalloyed, but with this difference—old Peter had been free and easy in his wickedness, and there was something you had to like about him even while you condemned him; his descendants and successors in the title, however, had been taciturn, sullen and close, and had maintained a sort of star-chamber obliquity of character that was highly revolutionary against the republican institutes of the century. It was said that Maurice was in the merchant marine, that his employment was not above felonious suspicion, that he was close with his money, that he practised all the reprehensible indulgences of old Peter, only in a mean and sordid fashion that made them twice as vicious, that he was crafty and brutal and a great many other things which the inveighers would have been at some loss to prove, seeing the subject of this scathing indictment was not known to them even by sight. But be that as it may, it was pretty certain that Maurice Windham was none too good, and that he cared not a rap for Trumbull Court or its opinion of him, which contempt was pretty good warrant that he would be credited with all his honest due of wickedness by the Court. Some there were who quoted from the decalogue about iniquities being

visited to the third and fourth generation, and counting significantly down from old Peter, prophesied that the time was about ripe for an exemplary visitation, which probably was said more in spite than in reverence, on account of the bad odor into which the family had come.

Thus it was that at the time of Lemuel's birth, Doom House had been deserted nearly two score years, and the fortunes of the house of Windham had become matter of adventurous speculation. It was said herein, in partial explanation of the premises, that the family fortunes had been pretty well depleted by old Peter's high living, and had never been repaired, and that any such display and lavishness as in former days would be wholly impossible on what was left of the original property. But this was no better than surmise. All that was certain was that the taxes on the property had never been in default and it was subject to no incumbrance of record, which would seem to signify that the estate had not been wholly impaired at any rate.

It was during these years of desertion that the tales had arisen which peopled the old manse with unnatural beings. These were generally credited to be the wraiths of beautiful women who had cast away their womanhood there, and the demons of men who had gathered the fruits of their abandonment. And every night in the big state chamber, which once had breathed the sensuous perfume of passionate love, these wraithed virgins passed along, in endless procession, while the demons laughed, and the demons yelled and with cross-bones two fiddled them on to hell.

Peter Windham had built well when he laid out Windham Close, as was evinced by the good condi-

tion of the structures upon the property, despite their long neglect. In this preservation something was due to abutting owners. Hiram Leete, who never could bear to see things looking slovenly about a place, was scrupulous in his attention to his side of the high fence which divided his land from the Windham property. One day, going out of the kitchen door, Lemuel saw a painter who did odd work for his father treating the fence to its triennial coat of paint.

“ Hello, Muggs,” he cried, gulping down the end of a sandwich which he had surreptitiously abstracted from the pantry.

“ ‘Ello, Lemee,” replied Muggs, with a vowel emphasis that was part of his dialect ; Mr. Muggs being of English extraction, as he always informed his friends. A spavined goatee that decorated his chin looked as if it, too, might have had an extraction, presumably at the hands of Mrs. Muggs.

Mr. Muggs was a caution in human flesh. He certainly was the rosiest man ever seen. His face was like a port light, his hair was only less luminous, his necktie was a preposterous attempt to outclass both, while his overalls were prismatic with daubs from every pot of pigments he had mixed during their term of service. In truth Muggs was a whole solar spectrum in himself, with his face, and therein particularly his nose, in the angle of thermal rays. He was a great cronie of Lemuel’s, and Lemuel went over and sat down on a step near him to watch him work.

“ Well, Lemee,” said Muggs, after he had submitted to this inspection for awhile, “ what’s ‘ee thinking on, me lad ?”

“ I was thinking,” replied Lemuel, “ that if you’d



put some of that green paint in your starboard shrouds you'd steer better after dark."

"Ha-ha!" exclaimed Muggs, "well thought, Lemee. I be a bit squeamish navigator o' nights, but it hain't side-lights I need, by the fishes! I'm all right till I get below the load-line, and no ship won't yaw, b' Gad, when she's down by the 'ead."

"But what makes you stow yourself so deep?" asked Lemuel.

"Ah, Lemee," he answered soberly, "I'm married. Furthermore, I'm a small man, and my 'oman is plump fourteen stone and a 'earty un, a terrible 'earty un. I've got to keep the family balance for the sake of authority"—here Mr. Muggs waved his hand in opera bouffe majesty—"and to make a hex-ample for the young uns"—here he made a little more courageous gesture. "It's mighty wearing on a man o' my build to be piecing onto natur' all the time, but it's the way o' the transgressor. 'Be ye not unequally yoked together,' says the service. Put a pin in that, Lemee, and never bite off more'n you can chew, particularly females," upon delivering himself of which admonition, Muggs turned to his work again with a doleful sigh, as if he feared he could not maintain the equity of his dual state much longer.

Having seen the Gorgon-visaged Mrs. Muggs in all her fourteen stone plumpness, Lemuel felt she must be very hearty and admired Muggs for his devotion to the principle of a domestic equation.

The contemplation of his other half, who was such an uneven moiety to him, must have had a very depressing effect on Mr. Muggs, for his loquacity was subdued for several minutes, much to the enrichment of Mr. Leete who hired him by the hour.

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" Say, Muggs," Lemuel said at last, fearing he had offended him and wishing to remove the direful image he had conjured up, " isn't Windham Close a bad place, with spirits and everything ?"

Muggs looked round at his little interrogator quizzically. " Ah, there's been a pile o' good timber rolled in there, my boy, a terrible pile !" and he squirted a flood of tobacco juice at a vagabond cat that had incautiously strayed near, as if to emphasize his idea of vastness.

" I don't see what that's got to do with ghosts," said Lemuel, displeased by the evident levity with which his question was treated, " and I don't believe it neither, for it don't look as if it had ever been cleared."

" Ha-ha," roared the painter, with a violent cachination of his squeaky little lungs, while he expelled another flood of tobacco juice at the spot where he calculated the cat ought to be if she had not taken flight at the first volley. " Say, Lemee, you're a joker, by the pants of Saint Patrick, a jolly joker, the very pick o' the pack you are for a shrewd un. But wait till you get a beard on your lip and ye'll know a thing or two more, figgers o' speech including."

" Muggs, you're a fool," Lemuel cried angrily.

" Yep," replied Muggs, " most folks is after they leave off short clothes."

" Who rolled the timber—old Peter?"

" The same old chap, and a merry un by the chronicle."

" Is that the reason he built the fence so high, to use up the timber?"

" Well, now, that's a natural thing for a wise un to hask," said Muggs. " Howsumever, old Pete being one as knew snuff from sawdust, and being

acquaint about women particularwise, I reckon he built the fence close on account o' the skeleton, which is a sly un an' won't habide no common caging. Old Pete weren't goin' to 'ave no sieve for the skeery creetur to strain through."

"What skeleton is it?" asked Lemuel.

"Old Pete's, of course."

"His bones?"

"No, his private skeleton, his show skeleton. Most families have 'em, specially aristocrats. I've got one to 'ome myself, only she hain't dead yet," after which *ex parte* fling Mr. Muggs chuckled violently.

"Tell me about him," said Lemuel, beginning to feel a good deal of agitation.

"The 'im's a 'er," replied Muggs, "a 'oman, a uncommon 'andsome un too for a bone un. She's stowed away in one o' them closets in the big house yonder. But she hain't forgot her sex if she be a dry un, an' every onct in a while she just claps 'er-self together and trips out a-gaddin' as if she still had stays and petticoats to cover her nakedness. Old Pete, he knowed she'd do't, that's how he put the pickets so thick. For this 'oman, if she finds a crack big enough to rattle one o' her drum-sticks in, she just sets down and passes her bones through one by one. She can't push her cranium through, for there ain't no pieces on't which don't signify, for it's light like most 'omen's pates. So when all her nether parts is through, she twirls her skull over the top and there she is, plump on t'other side. Then she fits herself together right smart an' off she lopes like a very devil of a dry un. 'Iggins the milkman, 'e saw 'er one morning, a-fumblin' for 'er 'ead as had toppled over the fence 'ithout 'er. She was all

fired flustered, said 'Iggins, so he tossed her bone-pot back to 'er an' off she skeetered like mad, for she can't stand no light sence she had no in'ards."

"Do you think she can get out?" asked Lemuel seriously.

"Not I, Lemee," said Muggs; "your pa, he says to me, 'Muggs,' he says, 'look arter the fence,' an' you can trust Muggs to put a circumwention on a 'oman."

Lemuel did not feel so sure of this as not to n-spect the fence on his own account for any tempting interstices.

The supper dishes had been washed and put away in the little glass-front cupboard in the dining-room. Daj had lit his pipe and gone off to Mrs. Doane's to continue his endless discussion with Mr. Mullin as to the comparative merits of an English gunner and a whaler's skipper, and to pledge his own conclusion in a mug of nut-brown ale. Old Mr. Gasser always insisted and always would insist that a royal gunner was more honorable than any rank in the civil marine, particularly the whaling service, because he wore buttons and because powder was cleaner than blubber. Mr. Mullin as persistently upheld the opposite. Thus, ever since Lemuel's recollection, had these two old gentlemen been posthumously contesting the relative honor of their laurels, and had drunk no one knows how many mugs of ale over the matter without reaching any agreement whatever.

"A master seaman," exclaimed Mr. Mullin, on one occasion when the argument had waxed hot between them, "is better than a deck-swabber to the Royal Mogul," in which epigrammatic epithet he included all subordinate seamen from commander

down, whether sailors pure, or amphibians like gunners and marines.

Old Sam felt that he had delivered himself of a rhetorical climax that was a silencer. He glared across the table at his confounded antagonist and then swallowed his mug of beer at a gulp. "Ain't that so, my dainty?" he cried, slamming his empty mug down with a bang and winking one eye most hideously at the vegetable-diet girl, while he kept the other fixed on his wife to watch the first contortions of the green-eyed monster.

Now the vegetable-diet girl, so named from her barrel-like development, being as fat in wit as in person, had paid more attention to Sam's gastronomic feat than to the argument, and had not wholly recovered her composure thereafter. She was by pedigree the daughter of Mrs. Haffen, but being a particular converse to old Sam's artistic conceptions of the Venus form, he had loaded her with her unwholesome sobriquet, and he delighted to hurl gibes at her.

"Hain't got to ye yet, hey?" exclaimed Sam grinning expansively, "punch up yer bulwarks, my hearty; reckon th' idea's stuck in yer meat."

A ray of something like intelligence shone in the poor girl's face. "You old Sam," she drawled, "I heard ma say you were a cabbage."

"What-er-what! what-er-what!" cackled Mrs. Mullin from across the room, snapping into perpendicular like a jack-knife. "Oh—oh, the shrew, the——" no knowing where she would have brought up had not a bellow from her other half precipitated her into her seat as suddenly as she had sprung out of it. "Never mind her, my fairy," said Sam reassuringly, "come over here and let an old man who

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hasn't forgot his navigation take reckonin' on ye. I'll calc'late out where yer waist line is, an' ye can stick a pin in't. 'Twill be handy for reference when the fellers come courting ye one o' these days."

But old Sam's climax had not been as indefensible as he imagined, the wit of his adversary had found argument to carry on the contest, there had been rejoinder and surrejoinder, rebutter and surrebutter, till it seemed as interminable as a bill in chancery. So, on this night when Lemuel was trying to drum up some excitement to counteract the pestering story that Muggs had told him, Daj had gone off to down any new defiance that might be conjured from the fumes of the evening's brew. Lemuel's father and mother too had stepped out to call on a neighbor, leaving him sitting on the back porch very much at a loss for something to do and perhaps just a little lonesome. It was very, very still. Little swarms of evening moths darted mutely hither and yon in the twilight. A bat came out from the shadows somewhere and circled ominously overhead. A cricket down in the garden began to chirp his vespers and then as suddenly stopped, as if he were frightened by the clamor he made with his puny rasping.

The story Muggs had told in the morning, which had been in Lemuel's thoughts all day and which he had only half-credited by daylight, began to have an uncomfortable probability.

It looked very dark up in those tall trees within the big enclosure. What if that mysterious woman should be on her gambols now! what if her head should roll over into his yard and ask to be tossed back! It seemed a very imminent thing to happen, a very natural thing in the darkness; so very natural

that Lemuel crept away into the house, half imagining he heard her knee-pans scratching at the fence and that she was endeavoring to climb over. Betsy was in the kitchen. Her workbag with the puckered neck that drew up with a string lay on the table beside her and in it was the green and yellow gourd on which she darned her stockings and which was so old that the seeds rattled inside. Lemuel was glad it was there, for Betsy had often told him that it was just such a gourd which had comforted the holy man Jonah, and for this it was a great talisman and could ward off all manner of uncanny things; whereof she had bold assurance, for her own mother in the o'd country, being once hard pressed of the devil himself, who came to her in slipper and cowl, had cast at him this selfsame gourd, whereat he fled as from Holy Writ nor ever stopped till he was clear of Tipperary completely, to the great upbuilding of the elect church in that bishopric. Betsy had shown him the scar on the nub of the gourd where it had struck the absconding Prince of Darkness, in proof positive of its mysterious potency.

It was so cosy and cheerful in the kitchen there with Betsy, the light burned so steadily, the fire was so bright, that the weird influences which had assailed Lemuel out of doors began to vanish and the malign tenant of Windham House had not one-half the terrors she had owned a minute since. He crawled up on the big wood-box that stood close by the stove and began to drum his heels against its side.

"Tell me a story, Betsy," he said.

"And what shall I tell you, Lemmy?" she asked, never stopping her needlework.

"Oh, anything," he answered, knowing he had

heard all Betsy's store of romance, scores and scores of times before.

"Shall it be fox-lox, then?"

Poor Betsy began the patient recital of the old rhyme he had listened to ever since he was old enough to understand the words, about a poor, daft hen who gadded about, telling all the animals the fears of her old addled head. "Fox-lox, the sky's going to fall," cackled this maudlin bird to M. Reynard, after which followed verses in which she pronounced the same fell catastrophe to Turkey-lurky, and Duck-luck and all the rest of the animal creation, for which a mongrel rhyme could be churned in her stupid old crop.

So Betsy droned on in her sing-song fashion about creatures innumerable, who were admonished of the universal cataclysm; and after all were exhausted, she caught her second wind, and began the tale about the "little red hin," and other strange beings of linguistic accomplishments, to whom Balaam's ass had been anything but a prodigy.

"Say, Betsy," exclaimed her listener, breaking in on this long line of stale heroics, "tell me about the woman that's down in Doom House." He had been waiting to ask this question ever since he came in, and had not got his courage up to it without the preliminaries of a more familiar wonderland.

"Bah!" exclaimed Betsy, "it's that old tinker of a Muggs, has been telling you indecent things."

"But ain't she there?" Lemuel persisted.

"I never 'ave seen her, Lemmy, leastwise since she come to be so spare a hussy; an' she'll do no one a bit o' good if she be there, with the boldness on her, leastwise young masters like you, as shouldn't know such things."



“ Oh, tell me about her, Betsy,” he said, feeling the old hateful realism of the spectral inhabitant return, “ I’ll ask Muggs again to-morrow, if you don’t.”

“ Well, Lemmy,” she replied, knotting her thread and jerking it through the cloth, to the full length of her fresh needleful, “ I’m not one as holds myself to be wise, leastwise about them things as are doubtful, and dead folks, I take it, be particular doubtful. I m not one as says whether there be a woman in there or not, knowing she’s none o’ my kin whether or no, and being not impertinent in other folk’s secrets like some as I could tell on. There be them whom I may not dispute, as tells strange things of the old house yonder, and evil enough too be the folk they tell on there. but the’re idle tales in my ears. Fifty years and odd have I lived an honest woman, as no man may say against it, and no bawdy jades can spell me now, be they skeletons or no. But I’ll tell you the story the gossips tell, Lemmy, about the great, cursed house that scowls on us through the trees ; for it’s soon enough you’ll hear it, and from them as might tell it worse.”

#### THE STORY OF WINDHAM HOUSE.

“ Once upon a time, long, long ago, old Peter Windham led a merry life in that house that is all lonesome now. It was full of dainty laughter and roistering shouts, and all the gay gallantries of gentlemen and ladies—God save them—in those days so long ago. Old Peter has been dead these many years now—God rest him, he was a well-spoken gentleman, they say—but his jolly company have never left the house. Their souls are imprisoned there, where they sold themselves, and they laugh, and

they shout, they revel and romp, just as they used to do when the flesh clothed them about, only more wildly, and more hideously, and more fantastically now. They lust and they love, they drink and wanton, just as in the old, old days, only more fiercely, and more gluttonously. But they never have the joy of fulness, nor the rest of drunkenness, nor the rapture of passion. For it is the task of their perdition that they shall repeat the habits they loved in flesh, all ungratified.

“ Now, these spirits, being all of indifferent wickedness, there was none who had preëminence among them to be their chief. There arose, therefore, a prophet from them who said that before the third generation in Windham House had passed from his inheritance, there should come a stranger among them, a spirit, as they were, who had suffered greater evil than had they, and could cast a darker curse. The third generation came, and with it came this spirit who had been greater in evil and was greater in cursing. And it happened thus, with her coming:

“ There sailed into the harbor one night, just at dusk, a strange, swift ship. Her decks were low, and she was all of black. Her masts were three and raked aft, and her sails were a barkentine’s. The tide was slack, and the wind was calm, but up the bay she came, her fore-yards squared and her gaff-sails winged, nor tacked nor veered nor luffed she, till just in the offing from Windham House she hove about, and her anchor went down with a splash. Her yawl-boat was dropped under her dark stern, and into it came a burly, hideous man, who was terrible to look at. With him was a woman of beauti-

ful fashion, and another ill-favored and sinister. So up they went to Doom House.

“The night passed on apace. The wind and the rain came in with the tide, the black ship rode in the offing. In the great chamber of the great house, in a great, canopied bed, lay the beautiful woman, and the spirits of sin who had each lain there so long before, as beautiful and warm as she, danced round, and round, and round.

“The hideous man sat by a table across the room; he had drunk heavily, and his face was hot and red. The beautiful woman arose from bed and came over to where he sat. She spoke to him, but he answered her roughly. She pleaded with him. He seized the bottle of liquor from the table and cast it at her with the strength of his powerful arm. The blood flowed out from her white young breast, the blood flowed out in great crimson throbs, but it never flowed down; it stained not the ground, nor her pure night-robe, nor the flesh of her fair, sweet person.

“‘See, see!’ she cried, ‘I have travailed with a man-child, and my lusty issue is suckled with my blood which flows not away. Oh, it shall be sinews in him, thou cruel lover! and by the token of his bloody nursing, my gentle flesh shall grow in him, my son, of giant stiffness till he repay my wounding!’

“The man heard her words like an echo from far away. Louder and louder they grew till they seemed to roar in his ears. He awoke from his passion and his drink. He staggered up, he tried to clutch her, he called her name—she was gone.

“The rain beat heavily without, the sashes rattled in their casements, the timbers of the great house creaked dismally and all the denizen spirits to whom

old Peter had delivered his fiefment grimaced from their hiding corners and knew that their prophecy had been fulfilled.

" The black ship rode in the offing nor riding light had she. There was a rasping of her chain in its hawse hole, a running of rigging in her blocks, her anchor was swung to the cathead, she spread her wings on the black night wind and flew away. The burly man was at her helm and the evil woman stood beside him."

Betsy paused.

" And what became of the beautiful woman?" asked Lemuel.

" They say, Lemmy," said Betsy very slowly, " that her skeleton is down in Doom House to this day, and her soul, oh, had it been as white as her poor corpse, it had been in heaven now! She is dead, Lemmy."

" Did she die because he struck her?" he asked.

" No one knows, Lemmy, no one knows he did strike her, nor how this story came. 'Tis a strange story; but one morning long ago, a woman's body was found in the drive that leads up to Windham House. It was very white and very cold and very, very beautiful; and the rain, like great, warm tears had fallen on its strange loveliness. Her eyes, all slightless and dull, looked up to heaven as she lay, and on her breast there was a wound. Her shroud was a nightrobe all of white and on it was worked the single word, 'Agnes.' Who she was and how she came, where was the wee one that had come and gone, no one knew. Had someone been foul with her in that lonely place, or had she, wandering in delirium from some otherwhere, fallen and made her hurt? Had she died of her wound or her

labor? More apt she had died of grief. At any rate the coroner could not tell. He held his inquest and the jurymen could not tell. The great gate was bolted within as for many a year; and if any one had really seen the strange ship and her eerie crew, they never told of it then. And if Maurice Windham was in truth her ugly skipper—and ugly enough he is, by all report—why, it's only long since that night that anyone has told it of him, and it is proved he had sailed from New York coastwise for the Indies three days before it all happened. This much we know, that the woman was buried in a little grave where they found her, and if she has risen from where they laid her and be abiding down in Doom House, it is no passing wonder, for she had never a priest to rest her."

Such was Betsy's story. It all seemed very real to Lemuel, which she had told, and yet he had not received half its meaning. The human wickedness and weakness and wretchedness, the contending passions of love and hate which were the woof on which all its fretwork of incident was traced, these were parts beyond his analysis, things which his life in its yet little span had not grown to the knowledge of.

The inherent absurdity of what he had heard did not present itself to him despite Betsy's reservation of judgment. He did not ponder that there was but a single accredited fact to found all this fanciful fiction on, that the imputing to Maurice Windham of privity to this fact was no more than an old wives' fable without even the attesting merit of heresay. What did he know of evidence or motive? To his mind the story was not at all discredited because it was unsupported, or because it told of things he did not yet understand except in a vague way. Cer-

tainly it was not more wonderful than the stories of the Brothers Grimm, or the story of Cinderella or Jack the Giant Killer or any of the other lore he had received unprobationally. It even had a greater and more uncomfortable conviction of verity, because it had happened close by instead of in some castle of Germany or other country at a very safe distance. What if he did not comprehend its subtler significance, he was not dense to all its meaning and emotions. It had a heroine and a villain like any fairy tale; it told of beauty and brutality, insolence and suffering, strength and weakness, purity and villainy, birth and tragedy, all those antitheses of life which are the substance of romance and which are first learned in the personifications of nursery lore. Perhaps Lemuel did not discern judiciously herein. Perhaps his unripe scholarship did not wisely construe the *haec fabula docet* with which he pointed the tale. Never mind: he has become a wiser moralist—alas!—since; he has construed the story over again, but Agnes is still his heroine as in the olden days and he cannot change his interpretation as he learned it then.

Lemuel went up to his room, his brain all awlirl with the things he had heard. It was beginning to rain. He peeped from his window over into the long driveway that led up to Windham House. All was dark and still. The night wind blew damply in from the sea and chilled him; he turned away and crept into bed. But sleep was a coy sprite that night. The things he had heard chased themselves over and over in his brain in wild confusion, like a catch in a barrel organ. The black ship rose out of the darkness of his chamber and went sailing across his bed like a float in pantomime, with most un-

nautical progression ; the spirits of dead men and women trooped before him in solemn measure as if in prothalamial procession ; and as they passed, behind them came marching Maurice Windham with a very large head and a very small body, just as Lemuel had often seen himself in his mother's teapot. His chin was double and his chops were flabby and dripping, and he smacked them as he wobbled along. Suddenly what had gone before dissolved and out of the grim and hideous company came the vision of Agnes, all lonesome under the dark night in the great enclosure of Windham House. Poor, poor Agnes, would no one bear her company ? Beautiful she was as an angel bright, pure as the twinkling stars that in God's great firmament above bent tenderly over her.

And then the rain came down and beat upon her pale face and her corpse in its simple winding-sheet wherein she laid her down to sleep. Is it the stars who are weeping for her ? else why does the rain beat down upon her ? Would it wash a stain from one so spotless ? Can it make those alabaster limbs more snowy white and cold ? Alas ! it can turn their sweet perfection to corruption.

He listened to the metrical drip, drip of the rain at his window. Yes, the corpse out under the larch tree is fading away, rotting and running and fading away. Her skeleton is down in Doom House, she is not under the larch tree any more ; and her soul—why it should be in heaven, but then the stars wept over her and Betsy said she was not there.

## CHAPTER VI.

## SEVEN TIMES ONE.

I am old—so old I can write a letter ;  
 My birthday lessons are done,  
 The lambs play always—they know no better,  
 They are only one times one.

\* \* \* \* \*

O Columbine ! open your folded wrapper  
 Where two twin turtle doves dwell ;  
 O Cuckoo-pint ! toll me the purple clapper  
 That hangs in your clear, green bell !

And show me your nest, with the young ones in it—  
 I will not steal them away ;  
 I am old ! you may trust me, linnet, linnet !  
 I am seven times one to-day.

—*Jean Ingelow.*

IT was with a feeling of surprise, not to say derision in his schooling days, that Lemuel first heard the enunciation of the Berkeley philosophy that time is in us. "Time," said his long-haired didasculus, "is only a norm of thought. It has no substantive or quantitative existence, but is a limitation and categorical expression of the mind of the ego."

Now there are few things, very likely, less profitable than a philosophical disputation. Certainly Lemuel Leete never entangled himself to support the idealists against their antagonists the materialists, nor to bolster up any metaphysical creed whatever. He would only have fallen into deeper water than he could wade in by such an attempt. But he did see the time when in his heart he wished to make a late apology to that reverend gentleman who



had labored to initiate him into the elementary mysteries of the human intellect, by confessing that the things which he had discredited in his tutor's instruction had seemed less irrational to him since. If time is not in us, where and what is it? Time is nothing more than a term of relation, a measure of intervals, whose divisions may correspond with certain physical phenomena, or, if we will keep the vernacular of our philosophy, to the periodicity of certain other mental categories. But its fundamental expression is by events and not by the almanac; centuries and years and days are but a metrical device whereby our minds retrospectively plot facts in their relation of antecedence and succession. But enough of this.

Out of the clouds that in mature life obscured Lemuel's vision back into his childhood and blended those years into one undefined impression, like the distant landscape whose parts are lost in the diminishing perspective, there stood out here and there seasons and experiences that suffered no diminishment or obscurity by distance. They remained as fresh in his memory as if they had happened yesterday. They were epochs in his life, landmarks in the course of those early years when his mind was not strong to remember. By them he knew he had been a child, had seen as a child, felt as a child. Some of these things which he remembered were most trivial, they had no relevancy that should fix them in his mind, why they had impressed themselves so indelibly when greater things had passed from his memory forever, he did not know; he merely knew it was so. One of these epochs was the day he turned seven. He remembered no other birthday when he was young. The days he was

eight or nine or ten were as much a blank to him as the same days might be to a stranger in the antipodes. But the day he was seven remained as real as yesterday.

Seven long years of robust, happy boyhood! what a very great age they were! And yet, how uneventful they had been, how little there was to differentiate one from another! Each was so full of joy, so free of care, all were so perennial in their conditions. All the friends he had ever known were still his own; *they* were no older, no grayer, no more infirm; only he had changed, only he had grown seven years older. Surely he was getting to be very nearly a man!

As he rose from bed on the morning of that important birthday, he had a consciousness of being greater and stronger and much more important than when he had gone to bed the night before with only one syllable to his age. He had passed out of the nomenclature of monosyllables into an entirely new dignity, and he walked down-stairs with a very heavy, and, as he thought, very impressive and terrifying tread. Such a sudden assumption of importance, however, was destined to summary suppression, for his father corraled him in the lower hall and squelched any further self-assertion. It was very discouraging not to be allowed to walk as one liked when one was grown up; he wondered if his father realized the proprieties that were due to such an advanced age, but he refrained from making a test case by a new attempt to express himself, until his father had gone out to his plants, and so could not take judicial notice of his doings.

Never was such a birthday as that one. First there were the presents, including a drum his grand-

father had imprudently presented to him, things of trifling value, but just as dear to the little donee. Then there was the dinner to which some delicacies had been added on his account, and best and most glorious of all, his loving mother had made a frosted cake, on which she had printed his name with red candies, and after it the dates of his birth and birthday, just as the parish had done for the dominie on the twentieth anniversary of his pastorate, only the dominie's presentation had been a cane instead of a cake, which was insignificant ; the cabalistic design was the impressive thing, and besides, a cake was more sensible than a cane, anyway.

How he marched around the dining-room with the best imitation of a sea-swagger he could appropriate from his decrepit examples, after stowing more of that glorious dinner between decks than his normal carrying capacity allowed ! His hands were plunged into his pockets, his chin held in the air, and despite the very steady floor and low ceiling, he could almost imagine he was strutting the quarter-deck of a sloop-of-war in all the trappings of an admiral. Never in all his future life did he know a day of such exaltation as this. Never did he feel so strong, so chivalrous, so martial ; never did the world seem so simple of conquest ; never was life so real, hope so quick, faith in the world's generosity so pure, as on this day that determined his first septennate. The world, from his young lookout, was a storehouse of treasure-trove open to his rifling ; life was one long, long span of happiness, full of valiant adventure ; all was before him, everything was to be won that should deck the triumphs of his manhood. Not yet had he entered into this greater life of possibility, but the door of opportunity was swinging on its

slow hinges and giving him a glimpse of the delights he should have and know. A few more years, only a very few, and he should burst wide the door that confined him, and go forth into that world of brave deeds, conquering and to conquer. Oh, boyish dreams! oh, childish delusions! how many have not proven their folly since this old world was young!

But birthdays must end like other days and push us forward into another year that tells off the hastening tale of our existence. Lemuel was very tired with the day's pleasure and when evening came there was no more tempting amusement than to climb up to his grandfather's room over the kitchen for one of their sociable visits, for Daj and he were wonderful chums.

Daj's room was a jolly place. It was full of mementos of his seafaring life and all sorts of things nautical and belligerent. There was a picture which was supposed to represent the Battle of the Nile, and which was so dingy and old it did not show any picture at all except from a particular angle. Lemuel believed it must be a cabalistic expression for that renowned engagement, for he never could see anything in it even at the angle but some solferino smoke. Another picture, which could be looked at straight on without conjuring with light effects, his grandfather always assured him represented John Paul Jones "a-lickin' o' the Tartars," in spite of the fact that it must have been painted long before that redoubtable chieftain stepped upon the deck of history, and it positively could not have portrayed anything more recent than Rollo before Paris. However old Mr. Gasser, who knew no more of the marauding vikings than he did of things trans-

cidental, was never disturbed by this obvious anachronism.

Old Mr. Gasser sat by the window of his chamber that looked out over the harbor and away to the Sound and the great Ocean that rolled beyond, on whose nourishing bosom he had spent the strength of his life. The long shadows of the low-dallying sun fell aslant the harbor of the quaint old town, silhouetting the dingy smacks and whalers at their ridings with its brightness. The battlements of historic Fort Griswold shone ruddily from the Groton upland, while Trumbull grew dark and frowning by the water's edge. A frigate over by the eastern shore rode with slack cable on the placid water in high, dark relief, the shadows of her black bulwarks grimacing up from the quiet fluid on which she floated, in mock bravado. It was the hour of twilight peace when the world puts on her solemn vesper livery and woos us to a reverent mood.

The smoke from Mr. Gasser's pipe curled up from its big, black bowl, it wreathed itself in fantastic figures about the gray old mariner's head like phantom pictures of the long ago, which made and dissolved and changed their fashion till they floated slowly out of the open window and were dissipated on the evening draught. A slanting shaft of sunlight shot into the room and filled it with a rosy light that mellowed the cumbered heraldry of the sea and war to gentle arms of peace. It fell aslant a print of Washington at Valley Forge, praying without the camp to the God of battles for the army that seemed so hopeless of success. It touched the painting of Nelson at Trafalgar and enhaled the grimy gunner in the foreground, whom Lemuel had always believed to be his grandfather.

Like the holy light on Tabor it transfigured the dull embellishment of this upper chamber with a blessed significance, and the rough and grizzled old salt who was hovering in life's low descendent felt the hallowing influence of the hour, as he watched the visions of many years that came trooping by in memory's revision. "And it shall come to pass that at even-time there shall be light," he repeated. After all life's battles lost and won, after storm and calm, birth and bereavement, despair and hope, at even-time, when all our wayfaring has become a tale that is told and we wait for the unfolding of that other life which we call night and death, then there shall be light. Adonijah Gasser caught the earnest of that promise. His sun was by its setting, the western glory was over him, and while the world was fading away in blackness the sun which was sinking below the horizon of the finite lit up the dark shadows the infinite whither he went, that he might pass onward, not in darkness but as one with a vision of his way. Perhaps too the old man was thinking of a young life that was very dear to him, who was entering the way all untempted where he had passed. That this little life, so unhardened to the voyage, should come stanchly through to its desired haven and enter the harbor in peace and in bright shining of the light as he was doing, may have been the prayer that rose from his heart. It is not unlikely, for his face lit up with pleasure when he heard a tiny step upon the stairs—oh, not a martial and terrifying step now by any means—and Lemuel stealing in placed his hand on the old gentleman's knee, in gentle warning of his presence. "Tell me a story, Grandpa Daj," said this little intruder, climbing up on the sturdy knees that had

so often held him, and laying his tired head against the great, broad shoulder.

Daj looked down into his face a moment in silence. Was he wondering what destiny was reserved for the little one, and how he could give him something from his own experience which would strengthen him in the way he must go? Oh, what chums they were, how very near, how very fond! And yet they were not comrades on the way, but spoke from the meetings of life's orbit.

Daj was in a reminiscent mood, and beginning with the British packet "Cassiopeia," from whose forecastle he first sniffed the breeze, he told, as he had told over and over again, how she had been wrecked off Madagascar and never reached the Indies; the story of his escape, of other voyages and other rescues, of slave ships and merchantmen, of frigates and cruisers, of beauty and villainy, of chivalry and cruelty, of mutinies and reprisals and piracies and wars, till Lemuel's boy heart leaped in his bosom. The old painting of the Battle of the Nile seemed to grow lurid with real fire and smoke, the cutlasses and muskets on the walls seemed to clink and rattle for a hand valiant to wield them. Oh, thought the boy, that he could leap the years that bound him in minority, that he could gird himself now with the strength of that charmed estate, manhood, and go forth in valiant wager to glorify with brave achievement to the bounds of the earth the name of the romancer and his kindred own! that he might be another Saint George, errant in the world to trample the dragon of wickedness! a David crying to the devoted hosts of wrong:

"For God, for country, and for right  
Behold a *man* come forth to fight!"

How long must he wait for his probation? Surely he must be almost a man!

The rosy light faded from the western clouds; the craft in the harbor grew into dark, hideous shadows, marked by the flicker of their riding lights; the splash of the long swells sounded along the shore with drowsy, dismal monotony. Gradually the voice of the story-teller merged into the cadence of the water, the visions of daring errantry faded into the shadows of the night. The brave people and the great ships and all the panorama of glory had disappeared into the obscurity from which they had come. The head of the little adventurer was resting heavily and more heavily against the ponderous shoulder. Sleep had come to repair the weariness of that long, happy birthday and carry on in dream-land the visions of delight. Two rough lips were pressed upon Lemuel's forehead in reverent benediction and two strong arms, lifting him in tender embrace, carried him unawakened to bed.

That seventh birthday was an epoch in Lemuel's life. Never had his grandfather told such stories as he told that night; never did Lemuel listen to those tales again. The sentiment the old sailor had felt of the symbolism of that sunset hour had been prophetic. His sun, which had known such bright meridian, was touching the horizon; on the book of his life it was written, "It is finished." The end was not immediate, the forces of the hardy life did not yield uncontestingly to destruction. But it was only a lingering, the sunset glory that faded gradually.

When they told Lemuel he was dead, he would not go to the chamber where the dead was laid. That strong, burly form, cold and inanimate, the love



and recognition passed away, the lips sealed, the room of fellowship become the haunt of death—the comprehension of all this came like a shock to Lemuel, it frightened him. The knowledge of death as an inevitable decree was not new to him, he knew that other people died. But death whose loss came to him in personal experience, which entered the house of his abode and cast its shadow upon his own life, impressed him with a meaning and awe he had never understood. Death to his mind was now a fact, not a name, a fact that one day would seal his own life as it had sealed that which had just gone out. But when would that fateful day be? Would it come before he accomplished those great things that he had set in the horoscope of his life? Perhaps. But if it came at the climax of never so glorious a life, what virtue had there been in glory whose reward he must leave? Life which had seemed such a bright, long era just before began to be clouded to his prospection with mystery and shadow. He began to see something of the antitheses of existence, that success and honor lay not in the way for him to pluck who came forth with virtuous shout, but vice and virtue, joy and sorrow, good and evil, life and death waged unremitting contest, and he who won reward in this surging arena won by long and strong endeavor.

## CHAPTER VII.

"WILL YOU PLEASE, SIR, TAKE DOWN MY KITTY?"

*Fer.* Most sure, the goddess  
On whom these airs attend! Vouchsafe my prayer  
May know if you remain upon this island;  
And that you will some good instruction give,  
How I may bear me here; my prime request,  
Which I do last pronounce, is—O you wonder!—  
If you be maid or no?

*Mira.* No wonder, sir;  
But certainly a maid.

—*The Tempest.*

IT was a hot, hazy afternoon in early summer. Lemuel was stretched lazily on the ground in front of the big gate of Windham Close, for there being no passage of vehicles so far up the Court the roadway was allowed to be overgrown with grass at that end. He was going through the different plays of mumble-the-peg with indifferent enthusiasm, for the want of something better to do. It had been an awfully long, stupid day. All the days were long and stupid now, for he had no one to play with and he could not have any very hilarious fun playing alone. He hardly knew where all his former resources of amusement and his playfellows had gone to, he did not understand why none of the "itinerant boys" ever strayed into the solemn limits of the Court nowadays as they used to, he only knew they did not come and the cats had multiplied accordingly. Perhaps the chase was not as seductive as formerly; perhaps Mrs. Haffen, who never liked their invasion, had frightened them off with her bad eye; perhaps

like poor Joe, they had merely moved on to other circuits in obedience to the progressive spirit of the times. It did not matter much, it would not solace his loneliness to know why nor whither they had gone, the pertinent fact was they were gone, and Mrs. Haffen, having burned her bludgeon in celebration thereof, was taking on flesh and favor prodigiously. To be sure Hugh was left, once Lemuel would have thought him a host in himself. He used to believe there was no one he loved or ever should love like Hugh. Hugh was the bright, particular star of his horizon. Hugh's daring made him bold, Hugh's enterprise stipulated his own more sluggish nature, Hugh was his champion, his mentor, his particular friend. Had he not whipped innumerable boys on Lemuel's account whom Lemuel himself was not big enough or brave enough to handle? Had not Lemuel's honor been as dear to him as his own? Had he not been the best runner, the stoutest fighter, the best-liked fellow at school, and had not Lemuel, as his friend and protégé, shared in the glory of his small triumphs? Assuredly. But alas, Hugh had latterly fallen into something of the irreverence to which all the other objects of Lemuel's first devotion had been debased. For after having gratuitously "wolloped" an exemplary number of boys on Lemuel's account, just to show how very dear his friend's honor was to him, he had put a finishing touch on his championship by whipping Lemuel too behind an outhouse in the schoolyard, to the no small delight of a fry of witnesses, who had at one time or another been put through the same procedure for the establishing of Lemuel's honor in the premises and who now approved the retributive performance with grins

as expansive and skew-jiggered as the cracks in a stone wall.

Hugh and Lemuel did not exactly cease to be friends after that. Youthful breaks are easily mended ; their mutual relations soon adjusted themselves on the old lines, Hugh continued to back Lemuel's quarrels and “do up” boys who seemed disposed to interfere with his inalienable rights with as good a grace as ever. But the turn at fisticuffs could not be wholly obliterated. It had been part of the discipline of Lemuel's growth, it was one event in that sequence of experiences which were educating him away from faith in his first ideals into that skepticism which postulates of life that things are not what they seem. The inviolateness of their friendship had been broken, they could never be just the same friends again. The pain of the blows was soon gone, but the bitterness of that word defeat, had sunk into his heart and made him less stout a man-child.

There are dogs who cower and cringe at a word ; there are horses which have lost their proud bearing—the curving neck, the pawing hoof, the prancing step, the distinctive fire of life, poor old nags that caricature their kind ; there are men who cower among their fellows, who slink through the world like whipped curs and jaded nags, whose every manner is an apology for cumbering the ground ; they set no front against the enormities they suffer ; the battle has been too often against them, and they bow their necks to whatever falls. Poor, poor, pitiable creatures, whether man or beast ! Dead, yet living, the epilogue of their lives is written in these words—their spirit is broken. The mettle of life, the courage of sex, the passions native to their kind are all

gone, they are only so many carcasses now, so many hundredweight of flesh rotting before its burial, they are whipped through the world and out of it, and lay themselves down to die as to a great deliverance.

But even Hugh, with his abated divinity, could hardly be numbered as one of Lemuel's resources nowadays, for Hugh had become a producer and his precedence over his fellow, which had formerly rested only on a year's seniority and a stouter development, was very much increased by this new dignity which he had taken on. It is doubtful if the dignity did not have its compensating asperities for Hugh, but if it did they were all lost on Lemuel who perceived only the dignity without its detractions.

The truth was, Mrs. Doane, believing her foster-son had arrived at an age where he could properly do something for himself, and incidentally for her who had nourished him so long out of her own lean store, had hired him to a ship-rigger, one Sol Goggin, down by the waterside, for a weekly stipend of two dollars, lawful money, payable to her as *in loco parentis*. Now, Cap'n Goggin—everyone is "Captain" in a maritime town who has ever given the slightest provocation for the title—being a righteous man and a Baptist by particular persuasion, believed conservatively in the theocratic injunction, "a just ephah and a just balance," which is to say, a just equivalent for all value rendered. It was plainly his duty, therefore, both as a Christian and a churchman, to see that he received full return for that two dollars weekly, of which duty he was so scrupulous that he took to reaching his wharf a half hour earlier in the morning than had been his wont before he had a 'prentice, lest Hugh, who was none too zealous for this particular item of the Baptist confession, might

become slothful in business and default in the full quota of his renderings.

Thus it was that Hugh, as a quantity in Lemuel's recreation, had been about as completely obliterated as if he had moved on with the itinerant boys to pastures new. Lemuel seldom saw him except Sabbaths, and the Sabbath was holy day in Trumbull Court.

But, as was said, Lemuel was lying on the grass in front of Windham gate.

“Humph!” said he, bad-humoredly, shutting up his jack-knife with a terrible snap, “mumble-the-peg's no good for one feller.” He guessed he would go into the house and ask his mother what he could do. The trouble with that was that he might run foul of his father, who was likely to be too fertile in expedients if he learned his errand.

While he was debating whether it was worth while to seek a possible suggestion against ennui from his mother, at the hazard of being drafted into the greenhouse for the rest of the afternoon, he heard a very low and plaintive “mi-eau.” There was nothing, perhaps, in that to startle him, considering the fecundity with which the cats had bred in the neighborhood since the migration of the itinerant boys; but nevertheless, it did startle him, for it came from inside the big gate.

The mythical tales about that unhallowed enclosure which had used to make him shiver, the fidgety creatures which Betsy had so often incanted over the kitchen range, and who, refusing to be allayed by the same magic which brought them forth, had used to follow Lemuel upstairs and chase themselves through his dreams like a motly Turnerbund; he was quite too stout-hearted to be troubled by such hokus-

pokus now, at least he tried to believe he was. That old yarn about the bogie-man who

“ . . . chaws and chaws  
And smacks his jaws,  
He'll catch you if he can,”

seemed very ridiculous now, at least it seemed ridiculous on hot, sultry afternoons in school, when its metrical swagger rose up out of the matter-of-fact print of his Reader and went romping through his head like the rounds they sang on singing-days. To be sure, hot, sultry afternoons are very unwholesome weather for a bogie, and school-houses are his abhorrence; maybe Lemuel would not have been so irreverent to him under more noxious circumstances. At any rate neither his curiosity nor bravado had ever led him inside Windham Close. The big enclosure was as desolate as it had always been. The familiarity of many years made Lemuel think little of it nowadays. Speculation concerning it had long ago been worn threadbare, its traditions were stale, it offered nothing in the way of novelty. Its existence and its stereotyped conditions were as much a matter of course as was the harbor beyond. Its unchristian reputation may have been one influence in keeping it free all these years from trespass *quare clausum fregit*, but neither its ill-repute nor its high fence could have been prohibitive to the genus small boy—a very wriggley genus he is—if there had been fruit trees or good open ground or anything at all seductive within. The safeguard of the Close's security had been its utter unattractiveness for anything.

There is doubt if either knowledge or age ever

entirely eliminates the element of superstition from human nature. Certainly Lemuel had not grown beyond the spell of early associations, despite his swashbuckler defiance of the whole troop of uncanny people on hot, sultry school-days. So when he heard the most natural of noises coming from the sepulchral enclosure, it had very much the same awe for him, as a voice from the grave. However, he crept closer to the tall gate and peeped through.

The feline, which should have been the proper antecedent of the sound did not at first appear in evidence, but his wondering eyes saw something so much more amazing, that for the moment, he entirely forgot about pussy and whether the noise he had heard had had a natural or diabolical emission. He saw then, a little girl, apparently something about his own age, coming down the open, which had once been the grand, sweeping drive to Windham House, and which was now all overgrown with coarse grass and a rank, matted herbage.

This commonplace fact—for little girls are very commonplace facts, we take it—should have been cumulative, it would seem, to the commonplace noise to have put Lemuel entirely at his ease, and divested the spot of any evil superstitions. But the commonplace fact was so very uncommonplace in the place where it happened, it was so revolutionary of all precedent connected with Windham House, whether historical or legendary, that it is doubtful whether it did not startle him as much as a veritably diabolic manifestation would have done.

To his excited vision his small vis-a-vis seemed the most beautiful girl he had ever seen—he had never seen many and most of the types in the Court outraged their sex. Loveliness, womanliness, virtue—



he immediately enshrined these all in her with chivalrous assurance.

Then a doubt came whether she were real flesh and blood or only a vision. This little one who by every token was so innocent, whose age had not yet learned that dark haunt's peculiar sin, how should she pass that way where profligate old Peter Windham and his gilded harlotry had used to pass ; where poor, unknown Agnes had lain with her wound exposed to Heaven that had not yet avenged her ; where demons had for years, by all report, had their own preserves, who were spirits of very damning potency and militant against all flesh ! Truly she must be a fairy whom the evil spirits had cast into bondage for their sport. Lemuel began to recall the daredevil ambitions of his smaller years and wondered disconsolately if he could brush them up for use, and whether it was really necessary to do so. Then he opportunely happened to remember a sermon of the dominie's about the devil coming as an angel of light, wherein the good man had said that the devil came, "in all sorts o' figgers, but particularly with petticoats and a purty face," whereat the women all snorted, though it surely could not have indicted any of them—and he concluded it was not worth while for him to jeopardize his health. in the light of this Scripture, by any attempt at an heroic rescue, for his fairy might any minute turn into a barb-tailed imp—a most repulsive but rather comforting conclusion.

Lemuel's consolation herein was destined however to very summary suppression, for his quidnunc fairy spied him, and she no sooner spied him than she came up close to the big gate on her side right against where he was standing. He wished now he

had gone to find his mother when he had thought of it, not being resolved of my lady's character; though truth to tell she was about as terrible to him whether imp or maid, his social edge being very raw.

“Good-afternoon, sir,” she said very prettily, without any gibbering or ominous sound at all.

Sir? well, well! Lemuel grew an inch on the spot; his calves jumped out like corn in a popper and he felt his belly extending to fairly aldermanic proportions within the waistband of his small-clothes. Indeed it must have been the tightness in the girth of those same small-clothes that made his face grow so red. Surely he must be a man after all, a condition whose achievement had been growing more and more problematical to him for some time.

And she, this little minx, why of course she was real flesh and blood and a dainty bit too, with dimpled cheeks and warm, rosy lips that must have been made to kiss, and wavy, golden curls all about her face. Who could ever doubt her? He wondered—no, he did not wonder anything at all, for he suddenly remembered that he was staring at her wide-eyed like the huge galoot he was, and had not said a word in answer to her welcome. What was worse, in spite of all his swelling grandeur he could not think of anything proper to say, a most unworthy lack of tact in a *man*. Accordingly he merely opened his mouth, in dumb show of a good intention and stared all the harder, while he felt his inflated abdomen subsiding like a punctured balloon and all his gallantry leaking out of the toes of his boots with a very sickening sound, just as the water leaked out of Bill Jones after they fished him out of the creek when he went skating on Sunday.

The dominie's sermon which he had just dismissed

from the premises, came back to him with renewed conviction of sound doctrine. Flesh and blood or no, the suspicion was stealing over Lemuel that he had fallen upon a very delusive seducer from the big house yonder, who was making him dance a very grotesque figure to the tune of her insincere cajolery. He was just about making up his mind that the proper evolution for him to execute was backward and skeddaddle, and that on the double quick, too, before his awkward anatomy collapsed into a flabby remnant of a man which this witching young lady would whisk away to Windham House as a trophy for her boudoir. It is pretty certain that in another moment he would have taken this invalorous movement had she not done something to reassure him.

"Would you please, sir, take down my kitty?" said she, without the least smile at his gaucherie. Ah, a veritable little lady, sure enough; she perceived that he had jammed his steering gear, so to speak, and was floundering hopelessly, and she wanted to help him out of his difficulty; it was very kind of her. He gave a gasp—a very weak and guttural gasp it was—to show that he appreciated her consideration, but the way she turned her bewitching baby face up to his only made his hulking gallantry broach the more helplessly. Truly that big, close-picketed gate may have been a barrier against skeleton women and all the unsubstantial company of beings which had tenanted the Close from old Sir Peter's day down, but the spirit that lurked in a pair of very wide, blue eyes peeping through it just then were too subtle for its confinement, oh, quite too subtle.

"Yes, ma'm," he blurted out at last, after two or three abortive attempts at speech that sounded like

old Sam Mullin in his asthmatic days. He meant this as an answer to her request, but it came after such a long, awkward pause that it did not seem to have much relevancy to the question or anything else.

However some light of the existing circumstances was beginning to penetrate his dull brain. Swinging on a lower branch of a locust tree not far within the Close, he spied the absconding kitten who had led her small mistress such a chase in her pursuit and was now mewling piteously to be rescued from the predicament which her silly noodle had led her into. Here was a plain, unembarrassing fact which gave him a better comprehension of the situation than all his confusing little petitioner could have said. Pussy had run away, pussy must be dislodged and rendered back to her proper custody. He tried to fix his mind on this plain emergency of the case and found he began to feel very much more like himself again. For in truth the dislodgment of cats, both domestic and prowling, had been no uncommon exercise with him.

"Perhaps you can't get over here," suggested my young miss, surveying the height of the fence dubiously. Nothing she could have said would have cured his discomfiture quicker.

"Humph!" he exclaimed pompously, finding a great accession of confidence at this contempt for his acrobatic prowess, "guess I'd be a stiff un if I couldn't." So saying he scrambled up the trunk of a basswood tree that grew conveniently near the fence, being more particular about the fact than the manner of his going, which was much too toad-like for dignity, and swinging himself out on a limb, dropped, for the first time in his life, inside the fence of Windham Close.

He had no sooner reached the ground than he began to wish he had not come; not that he was troubled by any of his old misgivings about the place—those had all been swept away under the excitement of the moment; but the tantalizing spirits that blinked from those same wide, blue eyes were so much more tantalizing and discomforting with not even a fence between, and he never did know how to act with girls.

But he was in for it now and made up his mind that the safest course for him, if he would come through with colors flying, was to proceed directly to the business in hand without further ado, for dallying was sure to set him floundering again. In pursuance then of this discreet resolution he made a bee line for the locust in question, up which he scratched with a series of graceless contortions, such as had distinguished his entrance via the linden tree. He believed there was something of the local imp in that iniquitous cat which had made it choose the only locust tree in the whole copse for its entrenchment. Undoubtedly it proved greater devotion to climb a thorn tree than any other, but the heroic consolation did not quite appease him and he yanked pussy from her perch with a movement more sudden than gentle.

“Thank you,” said my little lady, as he rendered up his capture with a parting jab of good fellowship in its neck. “Do you have to go right back?” she added shyly, as he was turning away without word or sign.

“I—I don’t know,” replied Lemuel, halting.

“’Cause if you don’t—I don’t have anybody to play with—except pussy, and—sometimes I get very tired and lonesome. Do you ever get lonesome?”

She glanced up doubtfully, as if she feared he never did.

Lonesome! did this little witch know how dolefully lonesome he had been that very afternoon, and how much more doleful his disease was going to be on all future afternoons, unless—unless—why, unless he had company, of course; he did not like to put it very plainly to himself?

They sat down in the long, dry grass and plucking a daisy she began to tell off its petals with rhythmical augury.

"What is your name?" she asked, flinging the deflorated stem from her.

"Lemuel Leete," he replied. It seemed very stupid to be repeating his own name out loud.

"That's a nice name, mine's Irene."

"Irene what?" said Lemuel.

"I don't know," she replied, "just plain Irene, I guess."

"Do you live down in Windham House? I didn't know anyone lived there."

"There didn't anyone live there I guess till we came—Barbette and I, that's my nurse. It's musty and old and spooky, the house is. Mr. Windham says he'll fix it a bit by-and-bye. He's very good to me and I'm going to try not to be lonesome, but it'll be so much easier if he'll fix the house and—if you will come to see me sometimes," she added, as if debating whether such frankness were altogether maidenly.

Lemuel felt just then that he not only would come over but would tip the whole dismal pile into the water, Barbette and all, and make off with Mistress Irene as his own peculiar spoils of conquest. How-

ever, as her question had not been a direct interrogation, he did not say all this to her.

"What kind of a chap is the old un— Windham, I mean?" said Lemuel, who had never been bred to a reverence of the unsavory proprietor of the Close.

"Uncle Maurice?—he ain't my real uncle you know, only he lets me call him that—oh, I have never seen him very much 'cause he's at sea most of the time. He's very big and very strong and he used to frighten me when I was little. But he's just as good as he is big and he takes care of me just because my mother was a dear friend of his. That's what Barbette has told me, for I don't remember my mother; when I was born the evil spirits carried her away, and I would have been all alone and died and the evil spirits would have taken me too if Uncle Maurice had not taken care of me. I used to live a long way off from here, I don't know just where, but now I have come here to live for reasons which Barbette says are none of my concern, and if I don't like it, why beggars mustn't be choosers and I might as well make the best of it, which I'm sure I'm trying to do."

"But where's your father?" asked Lemuel, "why don't he take care of you?"

She did not answer him immediately. He thought the question puzzled, perhaps troubled her, she was so sober; he wished he had not asked it.

"Do all little girls have fathers?" she asked at last, looking into his face seriously. Her question and her manner discomfited him. He thought a shadow had suddenly come across her brightness; he did not know just why, he did not know exactly what the change was, neither did he fully understand the question she had put to him.

"Why, all little girls I ever knew," he answered.

"I don't know," she said, "they never told me of him, I'm afraid the evil spirits took him too."

"I guess I had better go," said Lemuel, feeling he had made a *faux pas* and had best get out before he went any farther in the wrong direction.

"Oh, don't go yet," she pleaded, "please don't go. I'll tell you a story if you won't, do you want to hear a story?"

"Yes," said Lemuel, "if I don't have to talk."

"All right, it's a jolly story and I learned it from a queer old, old woman, where I used to live, a very long way from here."

#### WHAT LOVE DID.

"Once upon a time, years and years ago, when there used to be giants in the earth, there lived in the Jungfrau mountain a mighty giant named Grimboldt. He was shaggy like a goat and very ugly to look at, but his name was known far and wide for the terrible wickednesses he had done.

"One day he was wondering what wicked thing he could do that he had not already done, to teach people how terrible he was, when he chanced to look northward toward the great Black Forest and there he saw a woman lying asleep. Her body was white as the snow upon Jungfrau, her limbs were like ivory newly turned, and the sunlight falling upon her shone back with greater splendor than it came from the great sun itself. Beautiful she was, like an angel, and her name was Love.

"'Ha,' said Grimboldt, 'I have taken many men and am weary; I will take the woman, so shall I cease from weariness forever.'

"He rose up and shook himself and his shadow fell



across the world. He stalked down from the mountain side and the earth trembled at his coming, for he strode heavily. Love heard the clatter and awoke in a fright.

“ ‘Fear not, fair lady,’ quoth he, kneeling before her, ‘for I come to make you Grimboldt’s bride.’

“ But the lady only laughed at his burly shape and stupid court, and told him to get back to his mountain, for she liked him not for a lover.

“ Then he was very fierce and said to her : ‘ This time three days from now I shall return. If, perchance, you have a lover to stand for you, tell him it’s Grimboldt he shall meet, and if he save you not, why—then, by Thor, you’re mine !’ So he spoke, and laughed like the sound of the avalanche, knowing well there was none dared dispute with Grimboldt.

“ Now was the lady much discomforted, knowing well her plight. It happened then that upon the third day, as she was thinking on the matter, chancing to look up she saw just before her a dwarf, sitting at the mouth of a burrow. He was a queer slip of a chap, with a very hunch back and a very drawn face, and he had a hollow about the stomach that seemed to show he was given to overmuch fasting. He made her laugh in spite of herself, he was so very droll.

“ Quoth she, ‘ Who are you ?’

“ ‘ I am a runt,’ he answered dryly, and he snapped his eyes thrice.

“ ‘ But I have never seen you before,’ she said.

“ ‘ So much I knew without telling,’ said he, ‘ for I dwell by myself—in very good comradeship withal. I have neither kin nor neighbor, for which I bless myself, and I make no fellowship with the world

which is full of follies. Therefore I wish your ladyship a bad riddance.'

"Now my lady, remembering that the time for Grimboldt to come back was very close—'Perhaps, thought she, 'this little man can save me, for I have heard they be a very cunning folk,' so she told him her straits.

"But he only snapped his eyes thrice again and said, 'Alack! Grimboldt is a monster man and I am only a runt.'

"'Yes,' said Love, 'you're only as big as the hole in which you live, but come out into the great world and I'll make you something better.' So speaking she lifted him up and kissed him, and her breath was warm upon him.

"Instantly a burning fire leaped through him. The puddle of his blood spun round and round, it grew redder and redder, and hotter and thicker. His hunch and his bandy legs stretched out with a snap, the pit in his stomach filled round as a conch. He grew by jumps till he was of fearful size; his limbs were straight as fir trees and stiff as oaks. His moleish sight grew clear and he saw Love beside him, not cold and dazzling like the Jungfrau now, but warm and pink like the morning; he saw himself in her two eyes and how stalwart he was grown, and the fire in his blood burned hotter than ever. Sweeping out his right arm he tore up a great tree and cast it at Grimboldt.

"So Grimboldt fell down with a terrible crash, and the dwarf, who was not a dwarf any longer, lived happy with Love ever after.

"And all because Love kissed him?" said Lemuel.

"Of course," she replied.

“ But why, if Love had such magic, could she not use it herself without needing any champion to use it for her ? ”

“ I suppose,” answered Irene, “ because Love is the gentlest creature in the world, and is only powerful in her power over others.”

Virgil very prettily says in one of his eclogues :

“ *et iam summa procul villarum culmina fumant,  
maioresque cadunt altis de montibus umbrae,*”

which dainty metonymy was as apposite to the simple code of life in Trumbull Court as it ever was of bucolic Gaul. Not till that curfew hour did Lemuel leave his little acquaintance whom he had been so diffident about encountering. Rather a long call for the first one ? Perhaps so as the clock counts calls, but not with Lemuel. The tedious Saturday afternoon, which he had been bemoaning, had flown away as by magic and the magician that had sped it was happiness.

Was it the same small boy that slid down the basswood tree who had climbed up by that unconventional entrance only a few hours before ? By every token of identification it was—Lemuel, only son of Hiram and Harriet Leete, residing at Number 30 Trumbull Court, minor ; surely the same ; and yet different, oh how different !

The materialists tell us that we fulfil a complete novation every seven years, that at the end of every such term we are materially a new quantity. All right, the reformation causes no inconvenience and is undoubtedly a wise dispensation of nature. But without compelling an issue with the materialists for the probate of their declaration, it would be

interesting to know what the compensating process of physical accretion and excretion has to do with changing a man's identity any more than the refunding of his investments or the turning over of his stock in trade. His goods, which are *bona mobilia*, are certainly endowed with as much personality as the constituents of his body.

The theorem may as well be formulated right here—and any one may accept it or not, as he chooses—that each individual mind, or to speak less correctly, the mind of each individual person, is a positive quantity; that it has positive properties which in essence belong to every mind but are distributively different in relation *inter mentes*; that each mind, or each component of universal mind, if you like, has a definite temper, a definite tension, a definite excitability by and resistance to external stimuli; that these mental susceptibilities, properties, and capacities are as natural, innate, and absolute as the appropriate properties of chemical substances which are subject to change by fusion, exposure or contact, or as any other physical phenomenon whatever, and that they are as certainly predicable if we only knew the formulæ of metaphysical computation. There is a good deal said about mental responsibility and mental balance, though what the other part of the implied equation is composed of we are not told. We listen to all the gratuitous grandiloquence about insanity, hereditary, emotional, morbid and otherwise. Our honorable judges, sitting under a dusty nimbus of decisions and *dicta* attach their official scrawls to orders appointing commissions in lunacy, committees of inquiry, and so forth, which is only *un pas* in the judicial jig we pay them to execute. We subscribe

to a fact one year and the next declare it a fiction and turn over our subscription to a newer creed. We gulp down no end of extravagant instruction about the will power, its supremacy and freedom, the sum of which is we are very potential beings and can do or feel or resist anything we wish. We express a kind of triumphant pity for one Mr. Calvin, who was so benighted in his generation, and we wonder if he has suffered a post mortem disillusionment of the fallacies he taught in the flesh. In a word we try to persuade ourselves we are factors and not results. When we penetrate the full meaning of that old adage, "quanti homines, tantæ mentes," we shall interpret the vicissitudes of life much more intelligently. The idea that a mind working on itself can make itself anything different from what it was created is about as rational as that old *faciendum absurdum* about a man's lifting himself by his boot-straps.

Lemuel came out of Windham Close a different person from what he had been before. He had felt new emotions, certain dormant qualities in his nature had been aroused, he had come by a new experience in that evolutionary progression by which he was passing from childhood into a larger estate. How novel the experience was must be judged from the retired life he had always led, apart from almost all association except the stale company of the Court.

Already he had made little Irene the mistress of his heart, she was his revealed fairy of Toboso but fairer than he had ever dreamed, she was the girl on Mrs. Doane's green lampshade whom he had spirited into his amorous fancies in the faith that one day she would be manifested to him in real life. To say that he was in love would be much too strong ; love is a

greater and more subtle thing than he could yet understand. Our affections of fourteen undergo many refinements before they finally settle down to their election. Those are our Arcadian loves, those first affections, which spend themselves in gushing valentines and amorous scrolls carved on the bench at school, with your initials and hers intertwined most intrically. They are harmless pastimes, but they must be seasoned with the salt of discretion and the spice of conventionality before we trust them.

Irene was his *enamorita dans Arcadie*. She was the only girl he had ever known except little Susie, barring one or two local expressions of the sex who had an anomalous character, like the vegetable-diet girl. His head was full of her virtues and beauties, he should dream about her by night, he should think about her by day, he should write her name and his together on the fly-leaf of every school book and then scratch it out again for fear the next boy would see it; oh, he knew he should. This was the change that had come over him and made him a new creature, a stranger almost to himself. Was it a result of his own volition? had he evolved a new condition out of himself? could he have felt any different by any amount of will power? Most certainly not. He had merely responded to a new influence, wholly unexperienced before. The result was as rational and inevitable as the solution of sugar and water. But to leave philosophizing and return to the point of digression.

Lemuel glanced cautiously down the Court before he ventured out of Windham Close that Saturday afternoon, to make sure that no one was in sight to discover where he had been. It was as quiet as the night before Christmas when, according to a famous

classic, which he used to read before he knew his letters, "Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse." The Court was as solemn and proper in its retirement as became that backwater place on the eve of holy day. However being familiar with the usages that had been in vogue in the neighborhood from time immemorial, Lemuel waited a moment to be sure that no front blinds winked significantly. No, all was safe and he slipped quickly to the ground.

Was he a trifle jealous of his small mistress already and wanted to keep all her charms uncontested for himself? Perhaps he was afraid of being twitted about a softness he was bashful of admitting at his age, and so terrified out of ever going again. Or it may be the secrecy which had always overcast everything connected with the Windham property infected him unconsciously to keep this new knowledge secret too. Undoubtedly all of these feelings affected him more or less to wish to come away unobserved. But there is suspicion that there was a cause more potent than any of these, and that was a sort of reverence his little mistress had inspired in him for the sentiments of purity and beauty he had enshrined in her. He had set up a new divinity in the room of his discredited penates, but her shrine was not for all to come to, not for the curious, not for the vulgar who might mock her divinity, oh, no, not even for the devout who would come in the spirit of love as he had come—and gone; least of all for them. She was *his* divinity, *his* household god. A common worship be it never so reverent, would prostitute her charms that made her to him divine. Surely his visit had been a tryst.

Twice seven has its ideals as truly as once seven, very pretty ideals they may be too. They warm

the blood a little more than the earlier fancies which they succeed, their heroes and heroines partake a little more of real life, for they are visionary only in the virtues with which we devotedly endow them, and they have a way of making our hearts pit-a-patter sometimes as Cinderella never could. There are villains, too, in the chivalry of the later age, and these are everybody who may chance to wink askance at the particular object of our affinity. But alas! all these folk are as ephemeral as their predecessors, the beliefs of twice seven are swept away by the sterner creed of three times seven. So the greater age breaks down the idols of the less, and justifies the proverb, “knowledge increaseth sorrow.”

Lemuel knew the fact, which he had been the first to discover, the retenancy of Windham House, would not be long anybody's secret. He understood the facility of the Court for smelling a rat too well, to be deceived by any such foolishness. It was only a question of time, and no very long time he imagined either, in his respect for the Court's ingenuity, before they knew as much as he. But let the Court find it out for itself, he did not want to be associated in the revelation.

After he had gone to his room that night and had made ready for bed, he drew a quilt around him and sat by his window that looked over into Windham Close. The spell of the day's happenings was too strong upon him for sleep. In the perfect calm of the night he could live them all over again and dally on their sweetness.

The light of the west-dipping moon dimpled fairily on the-dark, huddling waves of the harbor; it floated out across the wide water beyond in pearly bands of broadening brightness till it was lost in the mystery



of the great horizon like a wavy gossamer ladder that stretched away to heaven. It crept through his shutters and spread its banded shadow on his floor. 'Twas such a night as when Lorenzo whispered Love's simperings to Jessica in the charmed garden of Belmont.

The tall trees of the Close were all the more darkly visible for the brightness, but they had lost all their terror for him now. The huge, fluted columns of Windham House gleamed through the intervals of their blackness, but it did not seem like a whited sepulchre now; it had become a palace, transformed by the queenly virtue of its little inmate. All the infamy of years had been swept away by her blessed advent and she filled all its stead. She was real, as the folk she had dispossessed had been mythical, her goodness and sweetness he had proved, and he knew nothing that was evil or noxious could dwell with her.

Sentimental little dreamer that he had turned! the moonlight that night was full of kaleidoscopic visions; very divers they were too, as is the fashion of such fancies; they skipped through the world with the lightness of Puck, they were here and there and everywhere, they jumped from the present to the past and the future with the most delightful freedom. And yet, through all their wonderful involutions, they continued a marvelous likeness, for there were always a pair of wide blue eyes and a wreath of wavy curls and a baby face looking gravely up to his.

Poor little Irene, sound asleep no doubt long ago in the great grim pile, was she perchance wandering in a dreamland Elysian? did she see there some

doting Strephon making pictures in the moon and calling her his Chloë? He wished, he very much wished he knew.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### SEVEN TIMES TWO.

I wish and I wish that the spring would go faster,  
Nor long summer bide so late ;  
And I could grow on like the foxglove and aster,  
For some things are ill to wait.

\* \* \* \* \*

I wait for my story—the birds cannot sing it,  
Not one, as he sits on the tree ;  
The bells cannot ring it, but long years, O bring it  
Such as I wish it to be.

—*Jean Ingelow.*

SEVEN years had passed since that red-letter day when Lemuel felt such a sudden investment of dignity, seven of those years he had wished so eagerly away, because they stood between him and coveted manhood. How far had they advanced him toward the grand estate which he had forecast? Surely not such a great way as he had thought. They had not been half so long in their passage as they were in prospective. Manhood had receded as illusively as the horizon while he had plodded toward it. The traveler in Sahara who finds the oasis he has pursued only a mirage, has yet at least the assurance that the reality is not far beyond. Lemuel had not preserved

even that confidence in his visions, for he doubted if the things he had seen had any other substance than his fancy. Certainly he did not feel half so much a man at twice seven, he was not so impatient to be grown up now ; his valorous election was not so assured, the fancies with which he had set manhood were dissipating into thin air as he approached the age which should prove them, and the ethics which he had appropriated from juvenile fiction and projected into real life as a potential fact, were becoming discredited with the passing of their attributive heroes ; his penates had been hurled from the walls where he had placed them ; perhaps they had not lost all their divinity, but they had been sadly disfigured by their fall ; all the pet rot that has amused the world from Adam down, about the dynamics of good and evil, the emotional fol-de-rol with which men are pleased to stuff their brains, and which Lemuel had once accepted as canonical, had been retired to the theatrical country to which he had relegated its fabulous examples. At seven he had seen through a prism ; life had been refracted by the angle of the medium, and its incidents were trimmed with glorious colors. All that was corrected by the optics of twice seven. The disillusionment was not half as pleasant as the first seeming, incredulity in his idols was not so sweet as faith. The real world with its moral contingencies and divided virtue was far less hospitable than the hero-world with its moral certainties and positive virtue. But he only paid one of the penalties of being grown : " He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow ;" as yet Lemuel had received only the rudiments of knowledge, and accredited the maxim. Would greater knowledge that should come with

greater age leave his household gods in yet more contempt, and him in a dismal pessimism? By the maxim and by experience, yes.

Seven years are not a long time to us who have learned how the speed of the years increases with their progression. Grudgingly we mark off each one that falls from the remainder between us and the Mosaic three score and ten and repeat the old aphorism about how time flies. To Lemuel seven years were a very considerable quantity, in fact half his life thus far. We compute time by the almanac and we think how exact is the solar computation and withal how wise we are in our day and generation. We say, so many years by the calendar shall be the age of consent, so many shall determine minority, its obligations and disabilities; but do we ever consider how delusive our numeration is? Time and maturity are never a constant ratio, years and age are not coördinate quantities. We live in measure with the eventfulness of our lives. Existence is not living but conscious experience is. If Achilles had made the alternative election that was offered to him, though the gods had prolonged his life unto this day he would not have lived as long as he had lived when Paris slew him. Seven years are not a very long while to us who are men and women grown, perhaps we are a little grayer, a little wiser, a little richer or poorer, that is all; but to the growing youth they may be a very long term, because they are a period of great transformations.

Lemuel had not made such emphatic advancement in the past seven years as to have lost all the traditions and characteristics of his earlier childhood. His scholarship was graded by the normal of the Third reader and he was in no sense precocious;

precocity would have been altogether out of accord with the movement of life in Trumbull Court, where even the sources of amusement, never very prolific at best, had taken a cue from the traditional restfulness and passed into that quiescence known to the political phraseology of a later day as "innocuous desuetude." Lemuel was only a tall, lank, gawky boy, with very confused notions of what to do with his hands and feet and a diffidence among his companions. There is no time in his life when a boy is so uninteresting, so gawkish, so stupid, so subject to the influences of his environment, as at the transformation epoch when he lays off the chrysalis of boyhood and begins to feel, very immaturely and unintelligently the passions and hardihood of a man. Lemuel did not understand thoroughly the change that he was passing through, but he had the consciousness of passing away from his former life into a life of new emotions and the tutelage of new divinities.

But not only Lemuel had changed, everything around him had changed as well. Perhaps this external alteration was in a measure owing to his different point of view ; but that was not all. Seven years had not passed without the common accidents of time. Even Trumbull Court, that tranquil covert of archaic endurance, had become mildly sensible that it was out of date and made a puerile attempt to fall in with the movement of the century.

His grandfather's death was the first event to mark this awakening to temporal incidents in Lemuel's observation. Since then Betsy had passed on to the majority, and one or two others not so intimately associated with his life. But especially, Mr. Mullin was dead. His wonderful epilepsies that had har-

rowed the souls of all his neighbors, were over at last, the doubts concerning his mortality had all been solved, and the victorious undertaker, bringing forth the hatchments which he had reserved in unproductive stock for the occasion, had cashed his professional melancholy out of old Sam's estate. The profane who had never been able to get on the windward side of Sam at a bargain, and who had used to explain his periodic reversions from the brink of the undiscovered country by Calvinistic aspersions about brimstone, came to the obsequies with their smellers pealed for the fumes. These babblers were confounded as they deserved ; they failed to secure any evidence of a Mephistophelian compact, and they thereafter fell into ill-repute, for having indicted the deceased on no better proofs than the hope that the devil might prove a sharper bargainer than they. Sam Mullin was dead, and those who knew him best could hope, yes, believe, that he passed on to a happier and a better home. The great rushing world never missed him as it had never felt his presence ; and yet he filled a place, albeit a small one, and he went to his rest in peace, and in the possession of a fiscal honor which some who have traded more ambitiously, cannot profess, Trumbull Court was poorer, the world was poorer by his going, for each had lost an honest man.

Something of the old time exclusiveness of the Court seemed to have given way by the passing of so many who had stood conspicuously in its autonomy. Sam Mullin's little shop dismantled of all its old-time associations, Daj's room all close and dark, with a moldy odor as of grave-clothes, that drove Lemuel back when he peeped in, Betsy's chair by

the kitchen range vacant, always vacant, forevermore—oh, yes, time was flowing on.

Pleasant, placid old Trumbull Court, slowly but surely the pride of your glory is passing away! The ancient landmarks have been removed, the movement of population and the democracy of the age will encroach upon the former places of your idols, supplanters will little revere your traditions or regard your clanship. Time and tide wait for no man, and what is more, they regard not the building of any man, but all shall grow antiquated and pass away.

Behold a torrent rushing mightily! Its bed is eternity, its current is time, its turbulence is the conflict of human passions. The way it has come is history, and it goes into the darkness. And for that the bank thereof is not straight, there is caught here and there an eddy, which circles round and round with a volition all its own and feels not the turbulence without. But it abides not for long by itself, out to the great river it is swept at last and is jostled in the general tumult. Lemuel is yet within the quiet eddy, his life yet revolves around the axis of its eddying, but it is not for long. Each yearly cycle in its centrifugal rotation carries him farther from the centre, nearer to those great waters that shall sweep him one day out, out, he knows not to what destiny.

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE CASE OF IRENE VAIL.

I'd like to be a cowboy an' ride a fiery hoss  
Way out into the big an boundless west ;  
I'd kill the bears an' catamounts an' wolves I come across,  
An' I'd pluck the bal'head eagle from his nest !  
With my pistols at my side  
I would roam the prarers wide  
An' to scalp the savage injun in his wigwam would I ride—  
If I darst ; but I darsen't.

I'd like to go to Afriky an' hunt the lions there,  
An' the biggest ollyfunts you ever saw.  
I would track the fierce gorilla to his equatorial lair,  
An' beard the cannibull that eats folks raw  
I'd chase the pizen snakes  
An' the pottimus that makes  
His nest down at the bottom of unfathomable lakes—  
If I darst ; but I daresn't.

I would I were a pirut to sail the ocean blue,  
With a big black flag aflyng overhead ;  
I would scour the billowy main with my gallant pirut crew,  
An' dye the sea a gory, gory red !  
With my cutlass in my hand  
On the quarter-deck I'd stand  
An' to deeds of heroism I'd incite my pirut band—  
If I darst ; but I darsen't.

And if I darst, I'd lick my pa for the times that he's licked  
me !

I'd lick my brother an' my teacher too !  
I'd lick the fellers that call round on sister after tea,  
An' I'd keep on lickin' folks till I got through !



You bet I'd run away  
From my lessons to my play,  
An' I'd shoo the hens, an' tease the cat, an' kiss the girls  
all day—  
If I darst, but I darsen't.

—*Chicago Record.*

LEMUEL was not mistaken in his confidence that Trumbull Court would soon discover the retenancy of Windham House, and would thereupon be in a dangerous state of ferment until it had possessed itself of everything that was to be known concerning the strange ingressors, who without note of warning had dared to reverse the desolate condition which had prevailed so many years over the place that everyone supposed it was perpetual. Trumbull Court proved itself true to its own precedents; the old life, which had died off in the reconstructive era that had been upon the neighborhood, had merely changed the personnel of the street, but had subtracted nothing from its traditions. The mantle of the fathers, and therein of the mothers, had passed to those who remained, and the perspicacity into family secrets, which had always stood in such worthy renown, manifested itself with no abatement of its former merit. In truth the fecundity with which the first little seed of discovery bred into a circumstantial narrative, startled even Lemuel, who was to the Court's manner born.

In the next fortnight Lemuel succeeded in making several stolen visits to his new acquaintance, having however abandoned the linden tree for a more secret and circuitous mode of entrance round by the waterside. The graces with which he had spontaneously endowed Irene at their first meeting, suffered no diminution from their later intimacy;

rather they grew in lustre the more he saw of their fair example ; while he, clumsy stripling that he was, who had not the grace to turn a pretty compliment or swear a proper vow, he, alas ! was becoming daily more daft than ever the grotesque knight of La Mancha was in his most driveling moments. To be sure his knighthood was not errant, moreover it lacked such conventional accoutrements as steed and squire, which might have commended it to the vulgar who gauge by display. But his chivalry was just as ideal and romantic as the errant order, and it was just as oblivious of the sordid facts which enter into real life and eliminate romance from our rational years. He was Sir Simpleton in sooth. We have all worn his orders at some time in our lives. 'Tis a very happy service while it lasts, but its wages are most uncommercial tender, as we find when maturing age puts an end to our enlistment and leaves us stored with his bad currency.

Lemuel had not by his later visits gathered any particular knowledge about Irene's history before she came to Windham House, by which token he was an unnatural son of Trumbull Court. His questions in that direction had been infelicitous at their first meeting and he carefully avoided any return to the subject. It mattered little to him what her past had been before he knew her, and he seldom thought about it ; she was her own commendation to him in the living, blessed present, and the past, why, it might go to the devil or anywhere else, since he had had no share in it. Their acquaintance had hardly grown more familiar by the lapse of a fortnight. His imagination had exalted her to a degree that forbade familiarity. She was Hypatia, he her un-Platonic but admiring disciple. His

chosen part was that of listener ; he had the grace to know or at least to believe that his wit for talking was in most odious comparison with hers and he was perfectly content to be with her and let the time be beguiled how she would.

But Trumbull Court, being affected with a very different fervor from his, assumed an aggressiveness of inquiry that he deemed impudent. How they found out so much he did not know, but certain it is they did find out a great deal which received a ready currency as fast as it was ground out. Their case may seem weak to the judicial mind and the evidence not conclusive, but it must be remembered that the intelligence of Trumbull Court was supra-judicial and extralogical, it scorned such clumsy paraphernalia of determination as premise and sequence and syllogism ; it concluded truth instinctively, it passed from fact to factor and from *semble* to *ergo* by bounds of perception, where more commonplace reason would not dare to follow. However it may be that their presentation was really an enthymeme, a figure well-known to the scholiasts, and that it had logical support, so to speak, between the lines. At any rate, their case not being on its face unreasonable, and being furthermore uncontested, if not in a measure admitted by the defaulting parties, their agents or privies, it ought, by every rule of jurisprudence, until overthrown, to be given full credit as the record of the case at bar. The count then and bill of particulars, which were substantially embodied in the findings, were essentially thus :

At an extraordinary term of TRUMBULL COURT, held at circuit, at the house of Mrs. Doane, widow, otherwise being known as the Cocked Hat Inn, on the day of 18—.

PRESENT: Hons. The Judges *en banc*.

The People ex rel. &c.	} Findings.
<i>against</i>	
Irene Vail and ors.	

The issues herein having come on to be tried before us, and after due deliberation had, we do find in manner following, to-wit :

#### CONCLUSIONS OF FACT.

- I. Maurice Windham is a bad man.
- II. In pursuance of this badness he did, on or about the 1st day of January 18— bring or send, or cause to be brought or sent to his property, known as Windham House, a certain woman commonly called Agnes, and designating herself also by the name of Vail, whether the same was her proper surname or not being unknown.
- III. That thereafter, to-wit, on the 2d day of January 18— said Agnes was found within the enclosure of said property, dead, the circumstances of her decease not certainly appearing.
- IV. That post-mortem proceedings and inquest showed that deceased had been delivered of a

child shortly before her demise. That this child was not found either dead or living, as must have been if there had not been contrivance for its removal from evidence, and that by these premises it was surreptitiously abducted. That a sufficient motive for such abduction would be, that its discovery would be damaging to the abducting parties.

V. That Maurice Windham had criminal privity of the shameful condition of the woman Agnes and stood within the motive aforesaid. That the child was abducted by him or by his subornation, though whether the woman Agnes came to her death by natural causes or whether he had felonious cognizance thereof, is uncertain, there being nothing to charge him *in flagitio pudendo*.

VI. That the child aforesaid lived and has been maintained by said Windham privately in some place unknown to the declarants herein, but remote from the venue of this action. That it has now been brought to the property known as Windham House by Maurice Windham or by his procuration, for purposes of his own which are wholly *obiter* to the determination of the issues herein.

VII. That the woman known as Barbette Beauprès, impleaded, is an hireling of Windham and substituted to the guardianship of the said child. Whether or not she was a party to the abduction aforesaid is not a pertinent issue herein.

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## CONCLUSIONS OF LAW.

That the said IRENE VAIL, defendant herein, being *nullius filia*, is subject to all the forfeitures, disabilities, and penalties of bastardy, which by our glorious common law is an heinous estate, and should have no fellowship with those who have kept themselves by the law and the doctrines of the Church evangelical.

So gratifying were these findings as an elucidation of a long-vexed question, that they were ordered entered, as the unanimous decree of the Court. To those who are disposed to criticise the above document as reprehensibly loose in legal method it must be charged that Trumbull Court was a wholly irregular tribunal and had a procedure all its own, independent of the practices of other judiciaries.

Bound by a proper regard for its own decisions, Trumbull Court avoided any fellowship with the object of its adverse judgment as scrupulously as if she had been the embodiment of all the infamous spirits that had traditionally haunted Windham House. Indeed the Court seemed to think her pollution was more contagious and damning than any that had ever infested the place before. Mrs. Haffen, who thought Maurice Windham had acted in the premises just to spite the Court, though he cared as much for the Court as he did for the Greenlanders, declared it was a shame to bring such a scandal among decent folk, and moved that the findings be amended by the insertion of "very," in the first paragraph, so as to read, "Maurice Windham is a very bad man." Some of the women, being confident Irene had never received any pious

instruction, were for dispatching to her a sister of undoubted integrity, who by the conscious rectitude of her own life could face the devil out of countenance and probably do him more or less damage into the bargain, of which sort there were several subject to requisition. The chances however of Mistress Irene's fleeing the wrath to come by any such heroic treatment were so problematical that the proposition was abandoned. So the matrons ranted and raved, after the fashion of their kind, while the lustreless virgins of the Court, meeting in Vestal conclave, spat out their skirts with true maidenly propriety and blushingly blessed their less resplendent stars that there was no tinsel about their milk and water effulgence. They had had an honest genesis if they were got between sleepy sheets.

But Irene, what of her? did she hear the decree that had gone out against her? The very winds would have told her, had she needed their speech, so rife it was without her hermitage. But she did not comprehend what was her infamy.

"Lemuel," she said to him one day, when they were in their favorite spot under a clump of pepperidge trees that overlooked the water, "I wish you could stay in here with me always and didn't have to go out again."

"Why?" he asked, not being prepared for the remark.

"Because," she answered, "you are the only one who lets me love you. I can love the good God, and the birds and the flowers and pussy; oh, I want to love everything! but nobody lets me but you and some day they'll teach you not to love me, and then you won't come back any more and I'll be so lonc-

some. Perhaps you'd better never come any more, anyway, 'cause my loving you might hurt you, I'm such a bad girl; and I don't want to hurt you, I don't, no," and she burst out crying.

Lemuel was appalled by the sudden turn affairs had taken. She had brought him to the Rubicon sure enough. His wit was not quick enough to take in the whole situation at once, but he knew that somehow or other their positions had for the moment become reversed, she was the weaker and was looking to him for support. He was a most crude consoler, he had never faced such an emergency before; if he had suddenly been dropped in the middle of Tom Tinker's land with no way of retreat open, he could not have been more discomfited. He had a vague idea that here was an opportunity to display some of that gallantry he used to dream about, but he was wofully ignorant of the tactics. He put his hand on hers impulsively and drew it back again, half terrified by his temerity. Then he forgot himself and all his doubts, he only remembered that she was sad, that she wanted help, his help, and the pith of manhood grew strong in him for her sake. Casting ceremony to the winds he impulsively caught her in his arms and kissed her—yes, kissed her. Perhaps he did it like a boor, perhaps his manual was not according to dramatic rule—he had never kissed a girl before—but kiss her he did, most fervently.

"Irene," he said, "I'm not going to go away for anybody and you mustn't tell me to. I don't care what the people say, and I don't know what it all means anyway; but I know you are the nicest girl in the world and I love you and—why, you can love me just all you want to, like pussy and the flowers."



“ Oh, I’ll love you ever and ever so much more,” she cried, looking up through her tears in a way that wellnigh scattered what little self-control he had left, “ but supposing I should hurt you, do you think I could hurt you ?”

“ Pooh !” said Lemuel, having grown very bold by this time, “ you wouldn’t hurt a flea,” and he gave her another kiss, just to show how sure he was of it. “ No one knows I come here, and what’s more, we ain’t a-going to tell ’em ; so they can’t stop it. And some day you and I’ll say good-bye to the whole kit of ’em and skip out where we won’t be bothered with them any more ;” having hurled which gage to parental control, he drew a long breath and felt able to sack Ilium and tack Hector to the outer wall if necessary, for the deliverance of his little Helen.

Those were happy days, those long vacation days in Arden. The bugbears that had used to haunt the old house had no terrors for Lemuel now, the gabble of the scandal-mongers could make no division between him and her, they neither understood nor cared for the gossips’ prating ; they were children in love, as simply happy as were our first parents in the Garden of God. They told and retold without dread or shame the old story of Agnes, always strangely beautiful to Lemuel’s fancy in the mystery which had surrounded her, now beatified with a new love and beauty by the knowledge that brought her so close to Irene. They plucked the forget-me-nots from the spot beneath the trees where she had lain the night she died, and by these trysting flowers that sprung from her bier they swore eternal fealty to each other with never a doubt.

Alas for such vows and such sponsors ! they are ephemeral, the one as the other. *Ἐρχεται νύξ,*

night that darkens over hopes and oaths, that changes the shapes of things and freezes our day-time passions. A new day arises with new auspices and new cheer, perhaps better, perhaps worse—who knows? only it is not the same, *ὅτι τὰ πρῶτα ἀτῆλθεν*. “To everything there is a season,” saith Koheleth, “a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to love and a time to hate,” and nothing endureth but God alone. Lemuel had not yet learned the significance of this mutation, all the conditions of his life hitherto had been opposed to his learning it; but he should understand it soon enough.

Summer slipped into fall with its schooling term, its shortening days and chilly twilights. Fall set into winter with killing frosts and capricious weather, imprisoning Irene in Windham House. The wind howled through the trees, scattering the myriad leaves that had audited their summer simperings; the flowers had perished from Agnes' grave, Arden had become Hyrcania, the nest of their wooing was broken up. Irene was as far from Lemuel as if with the birds of passage she had followed the sunshine southward. Windham House was not Windham Close, its doors were as exclusive to him as ever, its skeletons, if it had any, were not for his disturbance, its dingy closets were not for his peeking, and the secrets that lay moldering within its four white walls were in a sepulture as secure as that which had preserved them undisturbed for more than a score of years.

There was, however, something that happened before the elements put their embargo on Lemuel, which added to the misery of his jealous soul not a little, during the long winter days and

longer winter nights when he was cut off from his mistress' company.

It was another Saturday afternoon. School term had begun. Lemuel was lying in his old spot before the big gate, indolently sticking his jack-knife into the sod and casting, every now and then, furtive glances through the gate to see if Irene would wander out of the house, in which case he would scurry round to his entrance place and be on hand to meet her. He had been waiting a good while and was getting very much out of sorts for fear he should not see her that day. Of course this was ridiculous in him to get out of temper for any such reason, for he would hardly have admitted to himself, much less to anyone else, that he was there for any more subtle purpose than the ostensible one of punching his jack-knife into the dirt. Probably Irene was in his thoughts more than half the time he was awake and very much of the time he was asleep, too; he dreamed out no end of romances that bound their destinies in sweet communion. And yet he stoutly denied to himself the while that he was really in love, which is no very strange thing. Surely we have seen a great many people of abler years combat the proposition that they were fools with just as much conviction and just as poor success.

He must have been thinking of Irene very hard, for he jumped very much when someone at his side exclaimed in a rasping voice of that uncertain pitch between piping and bass which characterizes adolescence, "'Loa, Lem!"

There was Hugh, large as life and twice as natural, to use an old aphorism, standing with his legs apart after the most approved style of youthful bravado, a grin expanding his mouth into craterous porpora

tions. Lemuel was not glad to see him and he did not pretend he was. The breach which had started between them when they were schoolmates had very much widened since they had necessarily seen less of each other. True, they treated each other much as formerly, but they did not feel the same. Lemuel thought that Hugh was growing faster than he was himself, that he was more overbearing than he used to be, and that he was learning a great many things that were foreign to the catagories in which they had both been brought up. Lemuel was a conformist to the ritual of the Court, Hugh was a radical of the worst sort.

“Helloa,” said Lemuel.

“Old man’s weakened,” went on Hugh, expanding his mouth still wider if that were possible, “he’s a soft un, he is,” by which ambiguous expression and divers others of equally vile English, Lemuel was made to understand that the pious Mr. Goggin, having striven long and faithfully to induct Hugh into the mysteries of ship-rigging by the confederated devices of a rope’s end and quotations from Scripture, had disgustedly concluded that two dollars, coin of the States, drew better interest in his own pocket than it did laid out on such a young reprobate, who was fit for nothing, so he said, but a Papist or a pirate, two equally estimable fatalities; in furtherance of which conclusion, and after the nimble Hugh had tarred a grotesque device on the Captain’s bald spot during one of his unwary siestas, he dismissed Master Hugh from his service, there is ground to believe on the toe of his hard-shell Baptist boot, for Hugh had a propensity for cushioned chairs for some time thereafter.

“Are you going to work any more?” asked

Lemuel, hoping with all his heart he would not long be idle ; for Satan, according to very good authority, has a standing commission for idle hands, and Hugh was certain to wear a brevet rank in the service of his impish majesty, where there was mischief to do. The particular mischief Lemuel dreaded, it is hardly necessary to say, was that Hugh might turn Paul Pry and scent out his trysts at Windham House, and then farewell to all the delights he had enjoyed uncontested. So habitual had been his submission to Hugh in everything, that he never doubted the result of this rivalry. Hugh was self-possessed where he was awkward ; Hugh was bold where he was timid ; Hugh was larger, stronger, handsomer, more manly in every way ; especially he had that instinct of popularity by which he gained a ready favor, where Lemuel, with the same opportunities, would hardly make acquaintance. There could be no doubt of Irene's election if it came to a pass between Hugh and himself. Lemuel looked grimly at his jack-knife and wondered if it would not be well to avoid future complications by forthwith serving up Hugh on the point of it. As there was a doubt, however, to speak figuratively, of whose ox would be gored in such an arbitrament, with the presumption decidedly against himself, he took better counsel and put his knife in his pocket.

“ S'pose I've got ter work,” said Hugh, in such a matter-of-fact tone, that Lemuel concluded the question did not trouble him much, one way or the other, “ the old un won't keep me no other ways, says she can't afford to make a gent out o' me. Guess I'll go to sea if I can spot me ship. But I ain't going in no fat-fryers on t'ree year cruises nor no other time, ye can bet yer pants on that, Lem Leete ;

they're dirty tubs, bah ! Nor no shuttle coasters, neither, that sail by bearings and never do no real navigation ; why, the lubbers as run on them fore-an'-afters couldn't climb futtock shrouds on a square rigger without tumbling off into the briny, to save their precious crops. No, sir ; the chap as wants me has got to sail out o' soundings an' do no blubber business. I'd go into the navy if I was big enough, or I'd go for a pirate on old Pop Goggin's recommend, if there was any o' them kind o' crews articling here. Bein' as there ain't anything in that line, I s'pose I'll have to call the deal on the first merchantman deep-sea bound as 'll float me out o' this hole. I can't stay here, noways. People are all dead here, been dead ever since they were born ; my old un's dead, your folks is dead, all the rest on 'em's dead, deader'n coffins ; they're ambulating corpses what ain't buried but ought to be, 'fer the good o' the service,' as old Pop Goggin says when he wants to swear and darsen't. He's a cock-a-doodle-doo, Goggin is—

Big A, little a, bouncing B ;  
I looked at Goggin ; Goggin looked at me ;  
' Fer the good of the service,' sez Goggin, sez he——

that's how we parted. And for the good of his top boots too, I guess. Say, though, Lem, they tell me they've hatched an egg ; is that so ?”

“ Ha !” said Lemuel. Hugh's swagger had never been acquired in the Court, and its vernacular was somewhat unintelligible to him.

“ Why, that there's queer uns come into the house in yander, and the women folks has smelled a rat along of 'em. I'll stump you to go down and take a peep at 'em, ha ?”

"I don't want to go," said Lemuel.

"You're afraid," exclaimed Hugh.

"I ain't nuther," remonstrated Lemuel. "I just don't want to go, and I won't."

"All right, baby-face," sallied Hugh, "go home and tie up to mamma's apron-string, the wind might shift to the north'ard and blow you into the offing. If there's anything new in this old hole I'm going to see it," with which he tumbled over the fence and strode away up the open toward Windham House, with as much assurance as if he had not been the rankest of trespassers.

Lemuel watched him until, coming closer to the house, he struck in among the trees and was lost to his sight. Then he went home, a very miserable boy.

It was well on in the afternoon. Lemuel had some chores to do about the house and when they were done it was time for supper. He went through the mechanical operations of eating, though without the least relish, and as soon as the meal was over went up to his room where he could be alone to think over all that had happened. A more aggressive spirit would have gone in search of Hugh, would have learned how far his fears had been realized and have settled it with his rival, either by a passage of arms then and there, which should have put one of the twain irrevocably out of the field, or by an excellence of competitive gallantry toward the lady in future, remembering that only the brave deserve or are likely to get the fair. Lemuel was not aggressive, he was submissive, at least he was where Hugh was the subjugator. It was his nature to believe the worst. His old misgivings began to return. Why had not Irene come? She had never

missed a Saturday afternoon before. Now when every other afternoon was stupidly devoted to school, she had failed him in that hope which had made all the preceding days of the week endurable. And she had given him no intimation, no excuse. In this state of things, Hugh had come forward of his own motion, he had ventured all uninvited where he himself had not the courage to go to seek his defaulting mistress. Hugh would find her, that was a foregone conclusion, and finding her, would win her heart with as easy elegance as he used to win Lemuel's 'mibs' in Sam Mullin's door-yard. Poor Lemuel! he was a back number, a super, a rag-baby, buffoon, anything you will, who had been lugged in in a past chapter just to pad the story and make a merry tale till the real hero should stride upon the scene and kick him into the outer darkness. Oh, there was no doubt about his status, not the least; the trouble was, he objected to being used for the conventionalities of comedy. He had not recognized the opera bouffe part he was cast for, and had made an earnest thing of it.

If jealousy is the unfailing token and concomitant of love, then Lemuel was very sick of love. There is no use of calling a wolf sheep when he has his fangs in you, it will not confuddle yourself or anybody else, and you have a better chance of safety to face him for what he is. Lemuel was in love, that was the truth of it, just as far as a lank, unsophisticated urchin of fourteen or thereabouts, who has only a half comprehension of the passion, can be in love. With a sigh, such as a distressed and rather infirm siren might have made, though it was hardly yet dark, he plunged into bed.

The next day he attended church with his parents



as he always did of a Sabbath. There, in the amen corner with Mrs. Doane, was Hugh, just as on any Sunday, except if anything, he was more conspicuously there to-day. He wore a big, round stud in his shirt-bosom, and a high stock-collar that made him cock up his chin like a major, and he looked for all the world as grave as a deacon in his pew. Lemuel scowled at him very hard—when he was not looking. Lemuel knew he was thinking more of piracies, the young hypocrite, than of the good words the dominie was drawling over his head, and there was no more orthodoxy in him than such as the gentle Goggin had left by his parting kick of the day before. For the first time in his life Lemuel felt a cynicism toward the integrity of the church.

Seeing Hugh, set him thinking of Irene; that is, it would have done so if he had needed anything to make him think of her. Poor little Irene—try as he would, he could only think of her as he always had, in love—where was she the pleasant Sunday, he wondered. Not at church, oh, no; he wished she had been so he could have watched her, instead of the Pharisaical Hugh. But she never came to church, no one wanted her there; it was a very respectable congregation, was the Reverend Mr. Smallneck's, quite too respectable for her fellowship. It doted on the Patagonians, did this respectable flock; it shed big, briny tears for Mr. Lo and his vanishing fraternity; it never tired of sending hoop-skirts and smocks and journals of the modes to the benighted Figis to cover their nakedness that they might be converted in good form. But to Irene its only gospel was, "Stand by, for we are holier than thou!"

"What!" said they, "is there no *delictus personarum* in the Church? Does not an enlightened exe-

genesis of the Scriptures interpret one passage by another, and is it not written, 'Touch not the unclean thing?' "

Little Irene, whose purity had never even known the thought of sin, whose love was as wide as the great world, who was more noble by every criterion of goodness than her defamers, was there no grace then for her? Hark! "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money," aye, he whose name is not upon a parish register who brings no currency of the church in his scrip, whose only temple is his heart, whose only sacrament prayer, he, thank God, may come to the Christ who said, "Neither do I condemn thee."

Lemuel did not try to see Hugh after church was out, but that evening Hugh came up to him as he was leaning on his own front gate. "Say Lem," he exclaimed, putting his hand on Lemuel's shoulder in his old-time way, "you ought t'a been along with me yesterday, I struck de general."

"Ha!" said Lemuel.

"Come along with me," Hugh answered, "and I'll tell ye, but remember it's quiet, no preaching on't till I'm gone."

They went down to Goggin's wharf—Lemuel thought Hugh took a malevolent glee in telling his story there—and Hugh perched himself nonchalantly on one of the hawse-spiles. The dark water gurgled in and out through the crevices of the pier as if it were muttering in its own weird speech the secrets of its murky depths; the same mysterious, subduing spirit came upon Lemuel which was so wont to possess him at the eventide.

"You see," Hugh began, "I was makin' up t'rough the trees, when smack I comes upon de general his-

self, old Windham, by all the spoons. Was I scart? not by a jugful, I ain't afraid o' no stuff. But say, he's a whopper of a big un, a reg'lar sport, I'm tellin' ye. He's got a thick neck and a black look and square, flabby chops that wobble when he talks. Well, he come onto me suddint, an' says he, 'Hey there,' an' I says, 'Hey there yerself an' meader-grass too.' Then he wobbles his jaws an' he says, 'You're a chipper un,' an' I says, 'So's your uncle downstairs.' 'The devil he is!' says he. 'That's what folks call him,' says I. So he says, 'What yer work at?' an' I says, 'Nothin',' an' he says, 'D'yer want a job?' an' I says, 'If it's soft an' yer ain't a Baptist.' Then he says, 'I want a chap like you, do yer know Goggin's wharf?' an' I said, 'Reckon.' 'Well,' he says, 'be there when the tide turns ebb Monday night, my yawl'll fetch yer off.' So Lemmy, I've shipped an' there's me boat, that low decker straight-away to the s'uth'ard just swinging up her riding light. Nothing slouch about her, hey? no fat in her kettles an' no Portegees in her fo'cas'le, howsumever there may be in her galley; for oh —

Her bows are clip and clean, my lad,  
Her stern slips out like grease,  
Her men are hearty men, by Gad,  
Her doctor's Portegese——

Say, Lem, come down to-morrow night, you can see me off."

"Did you see anyone else in there?" asked Lemuel.

"Naw," said Hugh, "when I seen de High Muck-amuck I see enough. There's nothin' more unless it is wimmen folks there anyway."

Hugh had not seen Irene, he was going away.

where he could not see her. Bah! what comfort was that to Lemuel? Would he not come back again, had he not received the degree of the inner shrine that admitted him to the mystic abode of the enchantress? He had shipped under Irene's guardian, he had got an inside track; by the analogy of the law merchant he was a preferred creditor against the estate of her affections, and despite his slur at women folks was it likely, after he had once seen her as he surely would some day, that he would relinquish his preference in favor of junior lienors? Oh, most unlikely!

A vision passed before Lemuel—a broad and barren landscape. The sun was balancing itself on the horizon thereof, grimacing most horribly, while toward it Hugh and Irene were skipping away in antic silhouette, leaving him to the consolations of a perpetual celibacy.

The next night at the slack of the flood Lemuel was at Goggin's wharf with Hugh. A ship's cutter slipped out of the darkness and came alongside the pier. A burly, rough-looking man in a visor cap was standing at her stern. "Where's the young duffer the skipper shipped here?" he growled in a half-muffled voice.

"Ready, sir," said Hugh.

"Stow yourself in the peak there lively," commanded the gruff voice, "and mind you keep your head inboard or you'll taste salt water afore you feel timbers; for my men give a stiff oar and it's running choppy 'twixt here and the ship."

"For'ard and inboard it is, sir," replied Hugh, drooping into the peak of the cutter with the agility of an able seaman.

"Push her off then," ordered the man at the helm.  
"Right? Give way!"

The boat slipped away into the darkness as quickly and stealthily as it had come. Hugh, Lemuel's sometime boon companion, the one person by whom he had made touch with the moving, rushing, living world outside, the hermitage of his home, had gone and left him more lonely than ever; for he did love Hugh very much, despite their boyish caprices, and Hugh wore his laurels yet, in his admiration, just as in the old halcyon days when he rounded up their schoolmates to do him homage. Oh, the former things were passing away very swiftly now, soon he too should pass away somewhither with that remaining company whose recession should close the last act in the long continued drama of Trumbull Court.

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## CHAPTER X.

### LEMUEL GOES TO NEW YORK

And so we came to Rome.

—*Acts 28.*

SURELY the sun must have learned a new step in his old age, for the cycles of his seasons that used to be so lazily long when we were tots of men, flee away with greedy haste since we are grown, as the sands in an hour-glass drop faster as they drop lower. The perspective of manhood that sometime measured our sight with its glorious promise, has faded most dismally since we came to the epoch of

its knowledge and with our stronger sight look beyond to an ultimate vision of the grave. There is no romance in our new apocalypse, nothing that tempts us to prod old Father Time to hasten ; but we see corruption before us, the casting aside of strength and loves and all successes won, a perfect emptiness. That unprofitable time of youth which we once longed so heartily away, looks beatified now through the maze of recorded years by which it has passed beyond reclaim.

Backward, turn backward, oh Time, in thy flight,  
Make me a child again, just for to-night.

Back to those simple days when the problems of life were all unknown, when the immemorial query of philosophy, "Is life worth living?" had not found unhealthy lodgment in my mind, and all of God's great creation was good. But Father Time is a very imprecnable fellow. "Carpe tempus," said the ancients ; he who plucks him must pluck him as he flies.

Once seven, twice seven, thrice seven have gone from Lemuel ; four times seven is close upon him. The credulence of the first age, the idealism of the second, the half-doubting, half-trusting ambition of the third, all the fantasies of former times have been swept away by the passing of the years that mustered them in. The lie of hope has been nailed to the doorpost of disillusionment ; he is a man militant among men. All the toys of mimic warfare, all the fol-de-rol of the mimic barracks, with which he so gloriously accoutred himself when he used to smell the battle afar off, they are silly things for safety now in the dust of the conflict.

Let us glance briefly at the historical significance of the years that have passed since we first saw Lemuel Leete peeping his greeting to the attendant world in quiet old Trumbull Court.

That was in the ante-bellum days when the sectional antagonism between the North and South had not gone beyond the bounds of a forensic issue. The country was in the first century of its independence, its territory was imperfectly settled, the population was reasonably homogeneous and American, so far as the latter term had acquired a significance, and the traditions of the early colonizers were still held in a sort of canonical respect. While Lemuel was a lad the industrial and political division in the nation, which had been brewing since the inception of the republic, and had been forecast by no uncertain harbinger as early as the Nullification Act of 1832, came to an overt breach by the declaration of secession. Now victory, perching upon the returning banners, demanded a dispensation of new things, the time was fallow for them. After a period of stagnation and reconstruction followed an era of phenomenal prosperity, which was also unfortunately an era of inflation and extravagance and the rising of political fatua. The transcontinental roads were built, western colonization became a mania, immigration set in from the remotest corners of the earth, the body politic was inoculated with every heresy under heaven. Wealth accumulated, men accumulated, and with the most alarming fecundity of all, ideas accumulated.

New York City took an expensive course of tutelage in municipal corruption; New York society, with a sudden awakening from its comparative puritanism, winked and yawned at the spectacle of more

gilded debauchery than it had ever before been privileged to witness. The romance of finance which had never made much thrift on this side of the sea, suddenly took unwonted vigor and ran through the gamut of crime. Madame de Ballet, winking her legs from the boards of Niblo's to the gaping bald-heads, first astounded and then bewitched them by her merry humor, while her scintillating toes kicked the old-fogy comedy into the inhospitable regions of the darkness visible. It was the Octavian age, when more gods were raised in the Pantheon of the city than it had ever known before.

Trumbull Court was not wholly dense to the meaning of the years that had had such broad significance. The human tide that is forever flowing into the western metropolis as into a great absorbing sink, flowed by the Court; it caught the little ships of life that had been floating there in long, restful anchorage, and whirled them on into the turbulent maelstrom of its own issue. Hugh was the first to feel the outward impulse when, on the night we saw him at Goggin's wharf, he embarked his fortunes on board the "Mollie Marie." But he was only a pioneer for other exodants to follow, just as the birds of passage, though some tarry longer than their fellows, must sooner or later obey the instinct that drives them southward. Other little lives, not so venturesome but just as responsive to the migratory impulse that was shattering the traditions of the Court, should, like him, be swept out into the world of greater things and wider vision.

Trumbull Court, the old, solemnly respectable Court, has passed away, like the generation of jolly skippers who used to tipple small beer at its "Cocked Hat," in the palmy days of the merchant marine.

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For twenty and odd years is a long time when folks are old, and the Court was very, very old. True, the houses are there just about as they used to be, but they have a melancholy, retrospective air, as of apology for enduring after the decay of their nobility, like attorneys who, having fared well in honors and emoluments, having outlived their school of practice and come to a pettifogging end at last.

Windham House still stands in its gloomy isolation, and the big picket gate that leads into the Court remains as securely closed as it always has since old Peter Windham gave over his seizin. The house is not vacant, but it is very, very quiet, and the inhabitants live as if they feared to break the funereal monotony of its long associations.

Mrs. Doane is dead, and the convivial laugh and jest have perished from the "Cocked Hat." Hugh has never returned to his home since the night he exultantly left it in the cutter of the "Mollie Marie"; or if he has, no one in Trumbull Court has ever seen him.

The Mullins', too, are gone, root and branch. Times were bad with them after old Sam's death. His widow conducted the business after a fashion for a time, but it never prospered. News that was really interesting was getting very scarce in the neighborhood, with the passing of the old timers who had been its characteristic integrals. Even such news as there was, got around without being posted at Mullin's as formerly. It was plain that the prestige of the crazy little shop was gone, the undertaker's next door was fairly outbidding it as a bureau of intelligence and sociability. Whether it had been Sam's conviviality or his hardfistedness, or what, that had given his store its popularity, certainly the gen-

ius of profit took its flight when he died. Mrs. Mullin, seeing the fatality of disaster in contending with the altered conditions, moved away, and an Israelitish pawnbroker, succeeding to the tenement, with little superstition of precedent, hung the sign of his trade in the room of the deposed figurehead, that had once stood for the good-will of old Sam Mullin's trade.

The undertaker, he is not dead, but according to the illogical nature of his craft, has gathered unto himself a new lease of life from the increasing mortality, and is going down to a ripe old age in fatness, wherewith he has fattened himself from the preferred claims he was able to present against the estates of his less hardy neighbors. In the words of a topical song, that once had more or less popularity in Bowery music halls, nothing is as it used to be, in Trumbull Court.

Lemuel has gone in the general migration. After his father's death, which happened when he was eighteen years old, there was little to bind him to his home, which indeed was growing hateful to him, it was so changed and so full of sad associations. As he drew closer to manhood he began to feel more keenly the isolation and incompleteness of his life. Other fellows had gone out into the world, they were preparing themselves for careers among men, they had new diversions, wider scope; and he was left behind, stagnated in life at its very opening. His old dreams of adventurous roving did not allure him now, he was not fitted by the solitude and gentle inactivity in which he had lived, for the hardships and contentions of such a life, whose glamor lies rather in tales than in testing. In fact, he hardly knew what he was fitted for, he had no election that

was not as visionary as his earlier fancies. He dreamed ambitiously of success, the romance of exceptionable achievement was as alluring to him as ever. Success to his mind had been some star-eyed goddess, who made election among the sons of men, and might be won by wooing, rather than the unsusceptible divinity she is, to be courted only by fighting. But where to seek her, how to woo her, by what tact to appropriate her visible benefits to himself, these were questions to which he hardly saw the beginning of solution: leave the Court, escape from his odious immurement; babe that he was, unhardened by exposure, undisciplined by contest, go forth into the field to campaign with those who had gained art and strength by service.

He went first to complete his education. He had some taste for study, but the life of a student did not suit him. It offered too much occasion for introspection, it was barren of honors or fraternity for him; by making him one of a class it made his failures and demerits comparative, and so more galling. His temper was too morbid and his instincts too solitary for such a life. He needed some rushing, absorbing, driving occupation that should purge his mind of unhealthful misgivings, and school him to congeniality with the world.

At last, with no very definite purpose before him, he took the little property that had come to him from his father and with the innumerable company gathered from every quarter under heaven drifted to New York.

As the pious Moslem pauses when from the mosque he hears the heralded name of Allah, so may we pause with Lemuel before the shrine of the glorious city. For New York was one of his loves

and we all know—at least we who have been young and warm-blooded know—how hard it is to leave one's love when she nestles her cheek close against ours, and we kiss her once and again and still again, till it seems we will never go, but that we hear her father in 'kerchief and top boots pegging his way from the solacé of his own nuptial chamber.

Lemuel loved New York—he loved to walk in its busy streets, to jostle with its people, to watch the pulse of its business. He loved to stroll on its avenues, to look at its mansions and wonder who lived in them and how their parlors were furnished ; to drive in its Park, to see the fine ladies and fine turnouts and finer coachmen withal, to be told that this is Mr. So-and-so, and that is Mrs. So-and-so, and to pay his respects to them by telling them—in his mind, of course—that he did not see as they were any better than he, although they came within a very select social numeration.

The great pulsating, huddling city was the Mecca of all Lemuel's hopes now. In its motley organism there might be found a place for him that he could fill. But at any rate here he could lose himself among the crowd, he could retire from the world as completely as in the Great Desert, he need not put himself daily in disparaging comparisons because he was not one of a class but just a unit of the population, free because unknown. Here he was disassociated from his former friends, they need not know his failures, he could walk abroad and meet people boldly in the assurance of his strangeness to them. In all that million of people he was not so lonely, not one-half so wretched as he had been among his friends, from whom he felt he was divided by some unlikeness, some defect that unfitted him to cope

with them as a man for the things of the world which he desired and which he believed he merited to receive.

He had not yet lost ambition or the social instincts of his nature, he never could entirely lose them. He had vague hopes of making new friendships and of winning some measure of success in this new field that might redeem his past failures. But hope was pretty well seasoned with disappointment. He realized how the years of immurement in the Court, coupled with his unassertive nature, had unmanned him for the struggle ; he was beginning to fear also that he lacked those natural affinities that initiate men into affiliation with their fellows. If, however, he could ever accomplish anything, he must do it here. If not, if he was doomed to perpetual disappointment and exclusion from the things he desired, at least the excitement of new things, the very rush and bustle of the city kept his mind from reproaching him with the past, by occupying it with the present, and so renewed his failing spirits.

Although Lemuel was eighteen years old when he left the Court, his acquaintance with Irene Vail had never fulfilled the promise of its early impetus. Whether any restrictions were laid upon her liberty after the visit of her putative father, which seemed not unlikely, or whether, as she grew older the fervor of her fondness grew cool and she found it convenient to invest herself with those social conventionalities that befitted her maturer years, Lemuel could not say. But certainly his opportunities for seeing her grew less and less, and her manner to him became very reserved.

Irene was grown to be a young lady when Lemuel went away. The old, romantic dreams of their

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united destinies had ceased to haunt him long ago. He still thought of her as a very exalted and beautiful person ; sometimes he took to wondering a great deal about her, and if she would always be just as he had known her, so mysterious, so beautiful, so inaccessible. But she had grown too much of a stranger for him to feel any violent emotions about her. A Platonic affection is never very disturbing ; true love is a passion, it needs contact and expression and tokens, the warm touch and hot flush of flesh and blood.

Lemuel managed to see Irene before he went to say a formal good-bye. She took his hand very cordially, hoped him every blessing, and said she should always remember him. They were commonplace expressions of parting, but her manner was so earnest, Lemuel almost caught himself believing them, he was so foolishly credulous. He wished he knew more of her. There was a deeper secret of her life than had ever been told. Would he ever know it ? Would he ever see her again ! He did not know ; but if not—as he saw her then in farewell, surrounded by mystery, indicted with reproach, in a secret hedge-ment from the world, entering into a beautiful womanhood, so he should see her forever,

## CHAPTER XI.

## THE STAR OF SUSIE MULLIN.

Pourquoi s'applaudir d'être belle ?  
Quelle erreur fait compter la beauté pour un bien ?  
A l'examiner, il n'est rien  
Qui cause tant de chagrin qu'elle.  
Je sais que sur les coeurs ses droits sont absolus,  
Que tant qu'on est belle, on fait naître  
Des désirs, des transports et des soins assidus;  
Mais on a peu de temps à l'être,  
Et longtemps à ne l'être plus.

—*Madame Deshoulières.*

SUSIE MULLIN sat listlessly in her cozy parlor. The myriad lights twinkled weirdly up from the streets below as if clustering in a mimic galaxy, the rumble of the great City of New York rose in low, dreamy monotony, the winter night-wind cooed with gentle melancholy past the window. She saw and heard these things and yet they seemed very impersonal and far away, for she was not thinking of them nor of the city dressing for its nightly vaudeville. She was dreaming of Trumbull Court and her father's store, of the days when she romped and played and wore checked frocks and practised her quaint little coquetries on the freckled urchins who played hide and coop in Mullin's alley. It is a long way back to those days, a way that can never be traveled except in dreamland. She is not little Susie now, twenty and four is quite too ripe an age for such diminutive address ; and yet she is not very big either. Hugh used to say—and Hugh was her particular friend,

you know—that he hated big girls, and Susie conveniently gauged her growth accordingly :

Not too big and not too small,  
Not too short and not too tall,  
Not too fat and not too lean,  
But just a dainty size between,

—that was the excellence little Susie had posited for herself before she was out of short clothes and she had grown to it very admirably, oh, very admirably indeed.

When Hugh had bid such hearty farewell to Trumbull Court to cast his fortunes with the “ Mollie Marie,” he had made a very decided mental reservation of little Susie from his riddance. She was not tainted with the obloquy that attached to every other organic part of the stupid place, and there is more than a suspicion that during the years of his vagabondage he found time to make more than one clandestine pilgrimage back to a rendezvous of her agreement, of which the good folk of the Court, with all their acuteness, never sensed.

When the star of Mullin prosperity was low in the descendant, and the orphaned kit of Mullin issue were scattered abroad to win their several fortunes as best they might, whom should little Susie more naturally make her confidant than Hugh ? She had always told him everything and he was the only person she had known in her narrow life who could help her ; all her other friends were as worthless to her as they were odious. Hugh was a man now, in years and in growth ; not one of those sexless caricatures with pitted chest and puny limbs who are a simian parody of their kind, but a great, strong, prosperous man. Had Susie been a witch she



would not have had him any different than he was. He had been out into the world and the world had received him into its favor. The years since he had left the Court had not been unfruitful of success for him, the fortune of the "Mollie Marie" had been good fortune and Hugh had taken his share in the general benison. He had been far and seen much, he was a man among men—and among women too, alas!—he knew a great many people, not stupid folks like those among whom she had been bred, but people it was good to know, who were just so many rungs in the social ladder to lift one up in life. Of course she would not make herself a charge or bother to Hugh; Mullin blood was much too proud and Susie Mullin in particular was much too smart for that. But he could advise and suggest, where she was so inexperienced, among his hosts of friends he might speak the magical word of commendation that would set her securely on the highroad of success, whither else, groping alone in the byways of disappointment and failure, she might never come. Surely so much any girl might accept from a man, even if—if—why should she not be frank with herself? even if Hugh were not the most proper, the only proper person in the world to help her.

The kisses he used to give her when he was a mere gallant in runabouts and she was in bib and tucker, the vows they used to swear by all the sacred things of the Court, surely these were not trifles, light as air, the perishing pledges of children! He had been never so far away but he had returned to her again, he had seen women never so fair but she was fairer, the childish words and symbols had been often confirmed to her by the passionate reiteration of hardier manhood. She was glad she was beau-

tiful, glad she had wit, more glad than ever before, for his sake. It would be the measure of her great love for him that she could give him so much ; and surely none could give him more : he should never be ashamed of her in any comparison, he never should be hardened to her by a more witching temptress. Oh, blest that she was born with the philter of love ! He had drunk and he could not forget ; her cordial was in his blood, he would return from never so far ; her sorcery was stronger than he, its humors were on him, its bands were round him ; a little while, only a little—oh ecstasy!—and its lecherous tension should drag him from his vagabondage, her bondman and her lord. When she had added to herself the graces of a wider association, when she had established herself among the people he would make her to know, then would he fulfil all his vows and make her his completely.

By Hugh's suggestion she came to New York to try the hazard of her fortunes. At last the golden age which she had forecast in her destiny so long ago, seemed breaking. Now she should have opportunity to become her true, best self ; she should have freedom, range, life at last. Of course this was but the dawn of her better life. In her fortuneless condition she could not discount the future by leading a purposeless life until the greater things came. She must work. But work was no disenfranchisement from the things she desired, else was she barred already ; and through it all it was a comfort to know that Hugh was by her to direct her efforts and cheer her lonesomeness ; he stood between her and disaster in the trying time of her new adventure ; he, assured in strength and knowledge and

favor, was to be her usher into the mysterious things of her unexplored world.

Confident, romantic little Susie ! she had yet to learn the lesson of life that we shall never be satisfied. When the great trump shall hail the millennial morn and we, awakened, shall spring resurgent to the herald, transformed with the likeness of God, then says the psalmist, we shall be satisfied, but never before. A new age was dawning for Susie sure enough, but it was not the golden age, for that passed away long before men were on the earth.

She was happy, very happy, why not ? All the things she had used to plot with half-assured confidence along her future way were hers at last. Love and liberty—with them she was omnipotent, there was no limit to the things she could do, at least she had used to tell herself so. But now—perhaps it was merely the caprice of the mind to doubt the fulfilment of its cherished hopes, perhaps it was the fretting confusion of new things—there came into happiness plaguing doubts which she had never thought of before, strange forebodings without relevancy or reason, arising out of nowhere; haunting her with the vagueness of superstitions. She was angry with herself for harboring them, she argued them away with the most positive logic, and still they returned to torment her. The world was such a big place, so much bigger than she had supposed ; there were so many things to learn of which one never dreamed in Trumbull Court ; conquest had grown such a big word, excellence had such wider comparison, sentiment in her new world had such a base alloy of merchantability—had she in fact the open sesame to the treasure-house of the delectable things she desired ? Would Hugh always respond to her

spell as he did now? or was her philter after all a base and worthless tincture, a potion of jealousy and not of love? What if no enchantment could ever win her lover from his roving! and if there could, there were other magicians, rivals in whom she had never believed before, who might enchant more potently than she. Vows are not bonds, earnest is not enjoyment, love is a fitful fellow. By Hugh and by him alone she must win, if win she did. He was her friend at court, on him she had staked all her venture. Would the structure of expectations she had built on his alliance fall for want of a foundation? Oh, kind and noble Hugh! forgive your little girl the ungenerous thought. Fool! why did she bait suspicion? Was not her beauty as radiant among the throng as it had been in the sequestered town of her nativity? Was not its sorcery unfailing, unchangeable, the world around, since love began till lovers shall be no more? What was a host to her! her power was real, irresistible, eternal. Hugh never would, never should leave her. The bands that were round him she would bind beyond all bursting, her hopes should not delude her, she had staked and she must play to win.

What would she do for a living? Here was a plain, practical everyday question that had to be answered. Why almost anything, she told Hugh, whatever he approved. But what could she do? Ah, that was a different question. Her experience in the vending of small wares hardly allowed her to take the bull of enterprise by the horns and demand terms from him. It was very discouraging at the beginning of her adventure to be confronted by her inefficiency, she had never thought of her living as a problem. Somehow, despite her brave words, she

had secretly believed the world was waiting to receive her, and now it seemed as if it were trying to crowd her out of even its humblest offices.

At last, by the good offices of Hugh, she obtained employment which offered a reasonable compensation and was within her capacity, as cashier in a down-town drug store which drove a thriving side line in soda waters. The proprietor, who engaged her after a personal inspection, being up to date in his business methods, took her rather as a piece of furniture appurtenant to his soda fountain than for her ability to make change, on the speculation that she might win some custom from his competitor across the way, who served equally good soft drinks but who rendered change by a shrewish damsel of forty or thereabouts. The task was confining and stupid and did not fulfil all Susie's anticipations of metropolitan life; but then she was learning a great many things she never had dreamed of before; it was work and an independent, honest living and not altogether disagreeable.

When she had first come to the city she had taken a furnished room in a respectable but moderate-priced boarding-house. This was fairly comfortable and reasonably within her means; but it was not long before she revolted against it. The people with whom she was thrown in contact there were everyday, ordinary kind of folk whom she could never capitalize for any of her purposes; she desired to improve herself and she could never do it by association with them; besides their intrusive sociability was odious. The boarding-house was only the old Court over again, with all its vulgarisms epitomized. But particularly, Hugh could not call on her with any degree of freedom. Visiting in a common parlor was

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the most unsociable kind of business, and inviting him to her room would have stimulated such a babel of gossip among the consciously respectable boarders as even she dare not provoke.

Hugh was quick to appreciate the difficulty of the situation and suggested that she part company with boarding-houses, which were nasty institutions anyway, and take a modest apartment somewhere up town. This proposition was not free from objection. In the first place the propriety was a little debatable, at least for appearance' sake, and again, an apartment however modest, with table d'hôte meals, was more than her position afforded. These objections were canvassed at their full value. Meanwhile the existing state of things kept growing more unbearable. The boarding-house soup grew more suspiciously composite, the boarding-house guests grew more officiously friendly, even the boarding-house cat turned Cassius—though it did not have far to turn, being a lean and hungry beast—and joined the confederacy against her peace. The whole institution was nauseous. The apartment suggestion offered the only relief, its difficulties were matters of feeling and not of fact, and she could not be too fastidious. Hugh would protect her in the expense, it was his wish to do so ; and as to appearances, she had no acquaintances as yet to comment upon it and by the time she should have, all would be cured. At any rate, why should she have any scruples about accepting Hugh's assistance except that she had not emancipated herself from certain old-fogy notions of independence which she had absorbed during her stale life in Trumbull Court? It was as much for his sake as for hers that she should live decently. Accordingly, after a proper demurrer, she consented

to Hugh's proposal. The apartment he selected for her was not very large, it did not need to be, its furnishings were not extravagant in any detail, and yet it was just the daintiest bit of a home. She chided him—not very harshly in truth—for surprising her so delightfully, but he only kissed her and said he wanted a place where he could drop in once in a while to smoke a pipe and feel at home, he was such a vagabond on the earth most of the time. She could call them his rooms if she liked and play she was just keeping them aired for him.

It was in this apartment that Susie sat this winter's night, dreaming of the past, wondering of the future. She had always been fond of dreaming, but her dreams had used to be merry with hope, to-night they were full of melancholy and foreboding. Perhaps it was the crooning of the wind, or the darkness, or the silence that spelled her, such little things sometimes turn our humor in spite of ourselves. She sighed, and then her sigh grew a little more articulate, "Hugh!"

"What is it, Kitty?" Only the fitful glow of a cigar gave now and then a shadowy reflection of the speaker reclining on a divan.

"Can't you take me to the Windhams' reception?"

Hugh took two or three long puffs at his cigar, blew the smoke from him in a huge cloud and sat up. "What!" he said, looking at her with a curious smile.

"I do not know why you should treat the question as so astounding," she replied; "after all the confidences we have had you certainly do not think my present condition of life is all I am ambitious for. You never told me my ambitions were absurd before. If my manner of life is going to broaden it must begin somewhere. In all this big city I scarcely know a

soul, no one outside of you who is worth knowing or can benefit me. You have hosts of friends, you know men at the clubs, you know women in society, you have your business to interest you, you go here and there and have this, that and the other recreation and yet you don't think it necessary for me to know anybody. I tell you, Hugh, it's just the old Court over again only a thousand times more hatefully, horribly lonesome, because I'm right in the midst of the things I can't have. Not a girl friend to be a bridesmaid if I married, not one to mourn if I died, no one to care if I live or die, sin or am saved. I'm nobody where I might be a somebody." She was talking almost fiercely, her breathing was hot and fast.

Hugh gave a long punctuating whistle. "There was a time, Mistress Sue," he said, "when my company was not wholly unsatisfactory to you."

"It is not unsatisfactory now. You know, Hugh, there is no one so dear to me as you or so welcome here, but you are not everybody and can't do everything for me. You know I want to make all I can of myself and I should think you would want to help me, that is, if all the protestations of friendship you have made to me in the past mean anything."

"I want you for all that is best, Kitty, and I think I have proved to you that my friendship is not all promises. But how can I take you to the Windhams' reception? People only attend such events by invitation, and the Windhams don't even know you, and—to put it plainly, I'm afraid they wouldn't invite you if they did. Receptions are not eleemosynary affairs like Christmas dinners, where they go out and beat the highways and hedges for guests and the host saws wood. They are given for people who have become definite sections of pipe in the



social or business world upon whom the entertainers want to fit their own tap. The whole thing is a job in plumbing and girls who live in flats and earn wages are not supposed to know much about such things."

"I never will know unless I learn and I never will learn unless I begin somewhere. The Windhams are nothing appallingly grand—you and I know a thing or two, so it is not necessary to discuss them. I am just as fit to attend their reception as anyone who will be there. I can go through the conventionalities as properly, I can talk as intelligently, you know you would have no cause to be ashamed of me; their only distinction from me is one of classification, I'm not in their herd-book. No, thank heaven, I'm not the spawn of some debauched upper-crust, but stand on my own legs, pardoning the vulgarism. Let me appear as Mrs. Windham's protégée, it'll be a bitter dose for her but she'll swallow it; nobody'll meddle with my pedigree, and if they do, let them, I will live down their snobbishness and make them glad to receive me."

Hugh reached out his strong arms and drew her tenderly down by himself. All the emotions that had been contending in her, had mastered her at last. Her head sank heavily on his shoulder, and she burst into tears. Hugh looked into her beautiful face, resting so close to his. Why should he hold her back from her ambition? Why did he fear to be sponsor for her success? She had the power that must win, that had always won against all odds, since Eve practised her witchery on our submissive old primogenitor—she was wonderfully beautiful. Why did he scowl as he confessed it? Or was it only the light that falsified his look. Bowing his head over hers he kissed her.

“My little girl is tired to-night,” he said, “and when we are tired the world looks always grim and inhospitable ; but all will be merry again to-morrow, little one, do you trust me ?”

“But will you take me to the Windhams’ ?” she asked, looking up.

“I’ll see,” he answered.

“Then I shall go,” she said contentedly.

The little gas lamps away down in the street were dancing grotesquely, oh, very grotesquely indeed, the rumble of the city sounded farther and farther away, the cooing of the night-wind fell lower and fainter and died away. The grim old world where people were sorted so unhappily, had turned into the fairy world whose sorceress is sleep.

Maurice Windham, red and robust, sat at the head of his family board ; his wife, pale and meek, sat at the foot ; her niece, an angular wench who had passed normally through all the evolutions, from seed time to harvest, and had been in pod already some several seasons, without finding a man who had the temerity to shuck her, sat coyly at one side of the dinner-table where she did nothing in particular but curdle the cream—and therewith the blood of Maurice Windham—by emphasizing in her skew-jiggered anatomy the skew-jiggered apportionment of family baked meats.

“My dear,” said Mrs. Windham, at which overture the virgin niece began to nod like a pendulum, that being a habit she had for discomforting her rosy uncle, when he fell into the rocky places of domestic difference ; he had from time to time hurled numerous pieces of tableware at her for these exhibitions, with the result of only breaking them and not her. “My dear, this is a most strange and out-

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rageous request. Who is this snip of a girl who wants to parade in false colors under our protection? We know nothing about her. At best she is a long way removed from the sort of people we want here, and she may be—one has to be so careful in a large city——” here the virgin niece showed signs of screeching, and plunged into the seclusion of her demi-tasse—“in fact, she may be anything, with that brawling Giles to promote her.”

“I don’t care if she’s the devil,” shouted Maurice, banging the table with his fist, “she’s—damn that shrew, she’s choking, hi there!—I say, I don’t care a tinker’s cussword who she is, I’m the fiddler here and she’s going to dance.”

“Oh, very well,” assented his wife, dryly, “that settles it. It seems then that this freebooter, Hugh Giles, this big boor, man-about-town is going to dominate our household hereafter, and quarter his friends on us at will. We know what to expect, I see.”

“Drink some tea, Jane, drink some tea!” exclaimed her husband, and with an amorous smile at her and a leer at his virtuous niece, he rolled out of the room.

Thus it was decided that Susie might go to the Windhams’ reception and the invitation thereto came in good order.

Well, the reception came and went, and Maurice Windham et ux. pegged one on the social cribbage board for the go. The affair was a success. It was noticed in the press, it was honored by the attendance of several persons of more than local reputation, it was graced by fair damsels and pompous dames who were not unfamiliar to polite drawing-rooms; and of course there came with them sleek young men and round-bellied old men whose quality

was established by the duplicate rating of the mercantile agencies and the associated mammas of the city. It was all over—the music and dancing, the wines and salads, the greetings and good-byes, and little Susie, rumbling home in a big coach beside Hugh, threw herself down in her own sober little parlor and cried as if her heart would break. She could not have told in that minute whether she was very happy or very miserable. The unaccustomed excitement in which she had been living the past few hours had brought her to a tension where for the moment she was numb to feeling and tears were nature's only laxative.

“Well,” said Hugh, lingering at the door to light a cigar, “was it worth the candle?”

“It was horrid, horrid!” she exclaimed, sitting vigorously up, “and yet,” she added, “I wouldn't have missed it for the world.” Her cheeks were feverishly red, her eyes glistened with the animation of the dance. “They were the most horrid and the most splendid people I ever saw. But I didn't know any of them and nobody seemed to care much, except that some of the women ogled me curiously, as if they half suspected I was a little adventuress whom Mrs. Windham only chaperoned out of grace to her coarse old husband, and a bad grace, too, I guess it was. I don't think even you, dear old Hugh, were very anxious to introduce me. Never mind, you served me better with the men; they were not so haughty and stiff, and if the men receive me the women will have to.”

Hugh chuckled with a low, guttural sound. “Good-night,” he said, and Susie was left alone, to meditate all undisturbed on the vicissitudes of a little girl's fortunes.

## CHAPTER XII.

## A SILHOUETTE.

On with the dance ! let joy be unconfined,  
No sleep till morn, when youth and pleasure meet,  
To chase the glowing hours with flying feet.

—*Byron.*

FAREWELL to flesh and all its sordid travail, hail to revelry and witching love ! for Venus and Bacchus hold high carnival. The lights in the great Garden twinkle more ruddily to-night than they twinkle on common nights, the furnishings of the grim arena blend more softly, the music breathes more rapturously, every inanimate thing, flushed with the spirit of the ardent gods, has turned a Bacchanal of their festival. The ball is on, long live the ball ! Roll it and bounce it, faster, madder, higher, higher, down the middle and up again, round and round in dizzy whirl, eke to the peeping dawn.

The carriages are rumbling to the door in long, monotonous succession ; there is the howling of Jehus, the slamming of coaches, the shouting of policemen, the muttering of the gaping crowd, and over all the dismal, ceaseless patter of the rain. In sacks and in shawls, in capes and in cowls, high hats, low hats and no hats, brunetted and blonde, bearded and bald, the motley votaries in teeming pilgrimage are coming to pay sacramental honor to the gods of love and wine. A pretty ankle twinkles for an instant on a coach step and is quickly smothered in invidious wraps ; pretty faces, oh what lots of pretty faces ! peep out from the darkness and flit blinking

into the glamour of the holiday temple of pleasure. Old men in whom the fire of the amorous goddess has almost spent itself, youths in the novitiate of their worship, hot with the fire of new devotion ; maids in whom passion still debates with honor, beautiful women who have closed the issue long ago and given their honor to passion—in ones and twos and companies they come to pay their devoirs to the patron divinities of the night.

And now, through the bright arena breaks the exultant call of the opening march. The dance is on, and revelry shall wanton till the morn.

In a box yonder a tawny damsel with deep, sensuous eyes, is leaning playfully on her fan and tossing the petals of her corsage roses down on the head of a rosy and rotund elf of twice her age, though 'tis said she is none of the youngest. He is not unknown in Wall street, this sporty elf, and she—why she is Mlle. Gethère, late of Paris, who has delighted the hearts of the vaudeville devotees these three seasons.

Further down the hall, comporting herself with greater dignity, as befits her superior quality on the boards, is Miss Genevieve Muchadoo, queen of opera bouffe, though by reason of the aforesaid opera bouffe being of a polygamous nature, it is uncertain whether she is the real queen consort or only a subordinate part of the harem. She is surrounded by a group of officious admirers, like her fellow artiste of the vaudeville talents, and it is presumed she hears their declarations with emotion, for her bosom heaves visibly.

A girl of scarce more than twenty years is passing near Miss Muchadoo's box, leaning on the arm of a much-bewhiskered and martial-looking gentleman.

Very beautiful she is, and very hot and tired, and she leans heavily on her escort. Who is she? oh, no one; she has not even a sobriquet, she works downtown in a mercantile office and he is her employer.

And now we see women in long skirts and low waists, and women in short skirts and high waists; women who are known on Broadway and women whose pinnacle is Sixth Avenue; Tenderloin stars and East Side belles, soubrettes and chorus girls, family men and bachelors, blasé youths and gaping youths, for everything goes at the great Ball of Venus and Bacchus twain.

It is the witching hour of night when graveyards yawn, and therefore the great ball, which has no sympathy with graveyards, puts on its maddest humor. The popping of corks has become a very fusilade, wine flows here, there, everywhere except down the throats of the revelers which are too saturated already to absorb any more.

Near the entrance to the winerom a nymph in pink attire, which has become sadly awry by the night's carousal, is trying to walk along the shoulders of a line of swallow-tailed sports, to the tipsy cheering of a crowd of spectators. Everyone is tired, everyone has forgotten the worrisome, matter-of-fact things of yesterday and to-morrow. Truly the great ball has been a great success!

In a box at one end of the arena a young girl is standing with one hand clutching the rail beside her, the other holding unsteadily aloft a glass of brimming wine. Her hair is all dishevelled from the orgies of the night, her dress is disordered and stained from the liquor that slips from the upraised glass. Her cheeks are flushed, her eyes sparkle like the wine, her dimples twinkle like the lights above

her, she is very, very beautiful, much too beautiful and pure and young to serve the merry gods.

If perchance her eyes could reach into the night a few blocks beyond that gilded theatre and she could see the peaked, screeching hags who in infamous pot-houses, in cups of fiery liquor, are practising the same divination as she, whose laugh was once as musical as hers, whose flesh as delicately soft and pink; if she knew that to be hideous and outcast like them was the inevitable destiny of the suasion with which she is coquetting, would she turn from the false gods? would she turn from the brawny man who hangs admiringly over her, whose glass clinks hers? Perhaps; for to be ugly and vulgar is disgusting. But she does not see into the darkness and define the road that leads from her to them. She only knows that she is happy to-night and she tosses off the wine to the feverish goddess of love.

Is this the little Susie who used to pause in the drudgery of her chamberwork to look in the glass and sigh that there was no one save the silly old dotards of the neighborhood, all odorous of whale-oil and brine, to pinch her pretty cheeks and pay her compliments? Is it the same—oh, surely not the same little Susie who used to wonder if there was no greater horizon of her life than the boundaries of Trumbull Court? Who should have love and admiration and conquest if not she? She was beautiful, she knew it, she felt it, even if the tiresome old codgers who ambled into her father's store were not always telling her of it. She had wit and ambition, she was made for something better than housework and the vending of small wares. Fame, poetry, love, the zest of life and of a rare womanhood, surely they lay in the destiny of her life somewhere.



Poor little Susie, there are enough to admire you to-night, your court is not drafted from fishmongers and seamy mariners, perhaps they might be safer counsellors.

That dark, burly man who watches so jealously by her—who is he? He has drunk with the drunken, but the wine is not in his head; he has been merry with the merriest, and yet his merriment is grim and controlled and almost savage. Who is he? why merely her friend; so the word goes and no one meddles further, for he looks of a choleric sort.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### SEVEN TIMES FOUR.

I'm weary to-night from watching,  
My eyes are filled with tears;  
Why don't my ship come sailing in?  
I've waited so many years.

My boyish fancy sent her out,  
When my heart was young and gay,  
And, year by year, I sit and watch,  
And sigh and hope and pray.

But as I gaze o'er the ocean,  
There are many ships I see,  
With treasures deeply laden,  
But none of them for me.

—*Sheffield.*

LEMUEL LEETE sat in the window of his home, puffing with slow regularity clouds of smoke from a blackened stump of a pipe. The soft evening air

breathing in at the window caught the smoke-clouds from him and wafted them out into the twilight world where they vanished lightly into air. Dreamily he thought each vanishing smoke-wreath, like the ghost of Hamlet's father, was a spirit beckoning him away to tell him the secrets of a wider and better duty. "Come out into the world," the spirits said, "come out and prove what man you are. There is treasure-trove to those who seek, there is a prize to those who fight, there is a real world of which your fancy world of long ago was a true allegory. Come out and see and win."

But still he sat there, blowing forth the tempting visions and mocking their entreatment. "Try the spirits," saith the Word? Had he not tried them, spent his life in trying them, and proved them false, everyone? He had dreamed his life away, and every dream had ended in disaster, till his failings had become prophetic precedents which had turned hope to despair. Already he had come to the zenith of his little ascendant; from hence his way lay downward to its setting, without purpose and without the incitements of eventfulness that are medicine to the spirit. His youth was spent, it had brought him neither increment of power nor happiness, he had never been young like other men, in life as in years. Now growth was complete; henceforth the animal forces would decay, and thought and reflection, stimulated in consequence, would hold up more tauntingly to him the effigy of his misshapen and misspent past. "Damned," he muttered through his teeth, "cruelly damned and cursed is that son of Adam who is born with ambition, who believes in the romance of life and the sincerity of his fellow-men. Had I a child I'd teach

him the gigantic lie of the world before ever he had a beard. I think my parents loved me, poor souls ! why did they never teach me these things ? Surely they never messed so bountifully with the world that they should raise in me preposterous hope. Was I, thought they, a thing more divine than issue of their poor, toiling bodies ? Bah ! Some fellow has said that life after thirty-five is very poor farming. Ah, very poor, old craven !”

And yet the spirits kept beckoning him—come out, come out, come out. To what friends should he go, what enterprises should he dominate ? What harlot of ambition should shear him of his locks while he slept upon her lap, and rising, cry, “ The Philistines be upon thee !” No, within the hedge-ment of his own desolate life he would sit and blow the deluding wraiths from the bowl of his pipe, out to join the innumerable company of sprites that haunt this bewitched planet ; so burying the past in the grave of deep oblivion should he live out his best, his unprofitable destiny.

Twenty and eight ! Surely he had lived a long time ! When in the old days at home he used to loose his little fairy ships from the window of his grandfather’s room, all odorous of heroic lore, they had sailed back to him from their shadowy cruises laden with reprisals of wealth and honor long before so ripe an age. Poor little fatuous craft ! they perished in the great waters long ago ! He had no ships now to go yon and back, and mock him with their venture. But he was richer without them, they had brought him only contraband merchandise.

His mother, in her errands about the room, paused by his chair and stroked back the dark hair that had

fallen over his forehead. "My boy is not cheerful to-night," she said, "you are too young to get despondent."

"No, mother," he answered, "I am not young; feel my beard, how stiff it is! see to what a size I have grown! oh, I am not young. Young men have loves, broils, adventures, intrigues, excitements, fellowships, all the germane things that are gendered in the vigorous circuit of their blood. They strut like chanticleer and cluck 'milady,' and all the silly hens cackle, 'milord, milord.' These things are the badge and probate of puberty and by their lack I am old, hopelessly, stupidly, old"

"I wish you wouldn't talk so, Lem," said his mother. "Your business has prospered, you live in abundant comfort, you are strong and well, few young men are as straight and fine as my boy. I don't see what you have to discourage you."

"You are wrong again, mother; I am not strong and well. I am sick at heart and when the disease is there, there is no health anywhere. But tobacco is a great tonic of morbid hearts, therefore use tobacco. Your Lady Nicotine is your only guileless friend, for she is always cordial to your humor. Never mind, mother, I'll take a turn in the air and I'll feel better. Good-night." He kissed her tenderly and strode rapidly from the house.

Whither should he go? Anywhere to escape from himself. The mere excitement of walking made him feel better. He threw back his great shoulders, he breathed deep of the mellow night air, he struck into a faster walk, he wanted to get into a perspiration, so perhaps the evil spirit would pass from him.

The bright front of a concert hall attracted him

as he passed. He looked at the gaudy bill and the still more gaudy lithographs of the cavorting ladies who were promised to appear. "Iniquitous libels!" thought he, "surely our dear lamented mother Eve in all the glory of her fig-leaf never looked like that!"

He would go in; he wanted to see a rollicking show. Carousal, a riot of merriment, vulgar horse-play of the common, careless world, such stuff could amuse him to-night. He hoped the singing would be bad, the dancing grotesque, the women bawds, the men fools, nothing was too vile for him in his present temper.

He seated himself at one of the tables, and after the manner of the house ordered up beer and a cigar.

On the stage a stolid-looking Teuton, with a red, puffy face and a brass-drum stomach that hung over the footlights, in imminent danger of being singed, was trying to tell the gallery gods, through a horn of strange convolutions, about the last rose of summer that lay blooming alone. He had been telling them for some time, to judge by his watery condition, and he wound up the rendering with a screech that set all the glasses on all the tables ringing in merry unison. The gallery gods shouted, the bald heads stamped, the whole audience agitated itself with one spasmodic burst of applause; whereat the watery Teuton, wobbling back upon the stage, boldly heaved his bass-drum front into position and told them the whole thing over again, while the baked meats and beer in his paunchy Dutch stomach simmered and stewed over the footlights and furnished the effervescence which gurgled forth in such mawkish melody.

“ Good ! ” said Lemuel, “ that’s the stuff for weary spirits. I used to think the tune pathetic but I see it’s only how you look at it. That fellow could make a joke out of Hamlet.”

Alas, the fickleness of favor ! The musician, who had done his best, if he had not done very well, had no sooner subsided into the orchestra than he was forgotten for Miss Rainbow Ray who now tripped upon the scene. Lemuel smiled a grim smile when he saw her and took to beer. She was beautiful only beside a Dutch clock. Her neck was thin, her bust was thin, her waist was thin, her voice was thin ; but worst of all, her legs were thin, a criticism she ought to have avoided by covering them up. If she could only have managed to be a bunch of rays she would have done better for scenic purposes.

With a thin smile she piped up a strange, solemn cradle-song :

The sun is ringing his ferry-bell,  
Hark, how he dingles it ! ding-dong-dell.  
Sail away in the fairy light,  
Manikin mine, good-night, good-night.  
    Across the river of drowsy sleep  
    Lazily let the anchor down ;  
    Just as the stars from their hiding peep  
    Baby has gone to Shadowtown,

Little one, tell, if with vision sage  
You could read the unturned future page  
Of woe and sin and ceaseless strife  
That makes the sum of human life—  
    Tenanted once on the Lethic shore,  
    Rocking drowsily up and down,  
    Wouldn’t you tarry there evermore  
    In the elfic harbor of Shadowtown ?

“ Humph ! ” grunted Lemuel, “ no baby but a

deaf baby would be conjured by such a lullaby. Why does she not sing a ribald, riotous song, something to match her audience and her own loose-jointed, licentious self?" To his surprise, however, she was lustily cheered and called back for an encore. To Lemuel, her singing was strangely melancholy, it was not what he wanted to hear, and he left in disgust. "I'll go see Franz," he said, "I can always talk to him, and whether mope or laugh's the word, we can mope or laugh together."

The theatres were beginning to let out and enliven the streets with their gay patrons. As he passed one of them his attention was attracted to a lady standing in the lobby. Was it that she was pretty, and stylishly dressed? Certainly she was both, and he was not the first one whose masculine eyes had been attracted to her that evening. He almost paused to stare at her. She saw him, and smiled. "Susie!" he exclaimed in unceremonious surprise.

"You have not forgotten me," she said, extending her hand.

"No," he replied, "but I was not expecting to see you ——" He paused with that tone of suspense as if he had expected to say more but did not know just what.

"No? Why I think New York is the most natural place in the world to meet one's friends. Hugh is with me—you remember him, of course—he has just stepped out to get a carriage, he will be back in a moment and will be delighted to see you."

"I cannot wait," said Lemuel hurriedly. He did not know why he felt such a revulsion against meeting his old friend. "I am glad to have met you, good-night."

“Good-night, Mr. Leete. I should be pleased to have you call on me ; I am always at home Saturday nights—a strange time, you think? Perhaps, but wonderfully convenient. If you come, you will meet a coterie of *bons esprits* who are rare good company. Good-night.”

Franz Mollet was an Alsatian. He lived up in the musty recesses of some old buildings on Washington Square. That was all the neighbors knew who had seen him go in and out with quiet regularity, no one knew for how many years, because no one in the neighborhood had lived there as long as he, it being a generally received maxim thereabouts that it was cheaper to move than to pay rent. Whither he went or how he lived were matters that never aroused the impertinent questions of these model neighbors. He never troubled anybody, by which he proved he was the very best kind of a citizen, and was entitled to a like immunity. His round, ruddy face and white goatee were familiar on the benches of the Square, where he took the air with all the content of the moguls who lived in the mansions on the north side, and rumbled up the Avenue with their coach and pair. His clothes were shiny and worn, and belonged to a mode that had long been out of vogue ; but he was always neatly dressed and often he wore a flower in his buttonhole. The nursemaids who wheeled their little charges in the Park, the copper who sauntered on the beat, the business men who hurried through on their way to their offices, and the weary loungers who cumbered the benches, they all knew him and gave him good-morning, and he responded to them all with the same courtly bow and the same cheery greeting. Very few, however, of the people who spoke to him, had ever heard his



name, and so he came to be called Beau Brummel among them.

Franz Mollet had been an artist once, not without ambition, it was said not without talent; but the muse of Thrift, who is of no inferior honor to her nine sisters, though she is not commonly supposed to be of the full Parnasian blood, had not smiled upon him. One disaster after another had met him and dulled his early purpose. To live in peace, and when his time was completed, to die in peace, was all he desired now. And peace, both of life and heart, he had found. He loved to walk out in the Park and see the flowers, to feel the warm sun and cooling shade, to watch the babies—mysterious little creatures they always seemed to him, so chubby and solemn; they were such wee pioneers in the world's great highway, he wondered how they would jostle their way along.

When the weather was inclement and deprived him of these pleasures, he would go to the art galleries or climb to the secrecy of his own room that looked over the Square, saying, "Now, Franz, you must be on your good behavior to-day, for you've got to keep yourself company." So he whiled away his uneventful life, as happily, no doubt, as his grand neighbors in the brownstone row across the Park.

Lemuel had met him in one of these rambles around town, and the casual acquaintance had ripened into a warm friendship. Indeed, this was the only intimacy Franz seemed to have. Whenever Lemuel felt in the humor for a quiet social chat, or whenever he was blue, he could go round and see Franz, and it always made him feel better. It was, in truth, a rare privilege, this friendship with Franz, and Lemuel appreciated it, although like most privileged

characters, he was sometimes capricious with his friend. Franz was a person not only of gentle sensibilities with almost womanly tenderness, but he had a rare scholarship and wide intelligence. He had had many experiences in his life ; he had traveled far and studied much. Whether it were love or literature, art or adventure, of which Lemuel cared to talk, Franz was always prepared, always entertaining.

So to Franz he went to-night to get panacea for his confusion of maladies, if only by venting them to a sympathetic listener. Climbing up the dingy stairs that creaked complainingly beneath him, Lemuel rapped at the door of Franz' room.

"Come in," shouted the genial voice of his mental Æsculapius.

"Ah, my big, grown-up boy," cried Franz, springing up to greet him and slapping his own pudgy little hand into Lemuel's ponderous one, "say, but I'm glad you've come ; an old midge like me gets lonesome up here, you know. Sit down and let's have a merry smoke ; see, I have a pipe set out for you."

"Merry nothing !" exclaimed Lemuel, seating himself and striking a match viciously on the sole of his shoe. "I'm all out of sorts to-night, Franz, and I've come up here to get some relief by venting my ill nature on you. It's all the relief I can get, so you see how amiable I am."

"Ho-ho, my boy," chuckled Franz, "ill-humored again ? Seems to me you're ill-humored a great deal lately ; I doubt you're in love, eh ?" and the little chap blew a furious cloud of smoke into the air, through which his rosy, round face peered like the sun on a hazy day.

"Now, I didn't come here to be joked with," retorted Lemuel, "you know I'm not in love and couldn't be if I wanted to; that's something that didn't go into my make-up."

"Then you ought to get it, my boy; a strapping fellow of your age who can get out of sorts but can't get in love has something very serious and unnatural the matter with him somewhere. But I doubt after all you're in love?"

"Now, Franz," said Lemuel very deliberately, "as I said before, that will do. I never saw you in this gay and frivolous humor before and don't know the cause of it now; but if you think to cure me of my distemper by any such allopathic jugglery as that you are altogether mistaken, that's all. If you're really gone daft, I'll forgive you for a prating, old fool."

"Not so hot, my boy, not so hot," said Franz, puffing on with calm unconcern, "young blood is turbulent; believe me, it's a sign of love. But listen, I want to tell you a story; perhaps by the time it's done you'll have got something of the sweat out of your blood and we can talk together. It's a story of the Cornish coast and I'm sure will suit your disgruntled spirits."

Franz told his quaint tale, and the odd pair sat and smoked for hours.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## A VISION.

Pour conserver ma gloire et finir mon ennui,  
Le poursuivre, le perdre, et mourir après lui !

—*Corneille.*

IT was a Saturday evening after Lemuel had so unexpectedly met little Susie. To go or not to go—that was the question which he sat debating with himself, trying to conjure a determinative oracle from his much-exorcised pipe. His invocation of the Priestess Nicotine was however only a formal proceeding which he habitually went through to feel right with himself, just as a good many people go to church without any appreciable increment of grace. She always decreed according to his wishes, and he was very positive on this occasion that he wanted to go. The only doubt that was troubling him in earnest and for which he could not get a Delphic solution was, how far his visit was going to be a success. It was impossible for him to think of Susie very differently from the way he had used to think; the years of absence did not count, she was just the same little Susie he had always known, with whom he might sit down and talk of old times and old friends by the privilege of their common fraternity in Trumbull Court.

But would he really find her such a familiar friend after all? The years—sadly he remembered how many they were—since they had met might not have been as uncircumstantial to her as they had been to him. The glimpse he had had of her the other

evening assured him they had not, they had made of her a glorious woman. Such women never dawdled away their lives but cordial almoners vied to minister to their pleasure. Such women were not reminiscent, the present was too full of happy circumstance for them to resurrect the past, old times were as disgusting as everything else old.

Yet Susie could not be altogether changed from her old self. She had not been a silly or a heartless girl. With all her foolish little wiles that were meant to dismay the hearts of her admiring playfellows she had been full of true woman's love that could not be cruel to even the weakest of God's creatures. His doubts of her now had no foundation except in the defect of his nature to be suspicious of everybody. Certainly no one could be more cordial in her greeting than she had been the other night. She had not seemed surprised to be sure, nor slopped over with emotion of any kind; but probably an unexcitable composure was an accomplishment she had acquired more successfully than he. She had merely shown a graceful acknowledgement to the long time since they had met and their maturer years, which he could not help admiring; moreover there might be reasons he was not acquainted with, why she should not treat him familiarly. So far from being stiff at least her manner had been so charmingly frank that he almost caught himself believing she really cared whether he went to see her or not. "Poor old Adam," he muttered, with a sigh of honest commiseration for his remote atavian relative, "you got us into a peck of trouble by being so accommodating to the ladies. Sixty centuries have not bred out of them the guile of their first dam but they play the devil for our perdition just as plausibly as ever. I thought

I was grumpy enough to be safe from their seduction but I'm as big a fool as the next man. All you little devils in hell! hadn't I delusions enough before?"

But with all his abjuration, Susie's image remained bewitchingly with him, tempting him to go. Whatever fictions and follies she had learned, whatever whirlwind of excitement had filled up her life, there must remain something of the little Susie he had used to know, who would not forget the days when they had been playmates and would welcome him for auld lang syne.

But how about the others he should meet, her guests—*bons esprits* she had called them, choice spirits without a doubt? Ah, by that token, she was not spending her life in the doldrums. He could guess who one of her friends would be—Lemuel made a wry face—and as to the rest *unus pro omnibus*, they were all no doubt of a kindred, drafted from the Rialto and the clubs, from firesides and lobbies, men on 'change and politicians, men on velvet and men on their uppers, benedicts and bachelors, knickerbockers and Bohemians, a general metropolitan potpourri, but all one in their admiration of the wit and beauty of their dainty hostess.

Lemuel had not met Hugh since the night, years ago, when they parted at Goggin's wharf. He recalled now with what a confusion of feelings on that far-away night he had watched his chum glide away into the concealing darkness to seek his undiscovered fortune with the mysterious craft that lay out on the black, swashing water. When she should spread her white wings and fly away, bearing the little adventurer, his friend, with her, what should be the fortune of her cruising, what treasure should make

her homeward burden, what heroic annals should fill her log-book? Why could it not be himself instead of Hugh, who was sailing out on the sea of a more glorious life? But if it could not, it was at least something to have Hugh gone; he was getting to be very vexatiously in the way for a friend.

Lemuel was not wholly ignorant of how Hugh had fared since then. He had heard of the shipping office of Windham & Co. down in the neighborhood of Burling Slip, that in some unexplained way seemed to produce a revenue very uncommensurate with its importance. He had heard Hugh's name in the city, and he knew that his sometime playfellow foraged in the delectable pastures of a recognition to which his own poor credentials of an honest and inconspicuous life were an insufficient passport. What divided them, his friend and him? Ever since the old schooling days when Hugh had whipped him at morning recess, just to round up his conquests, their ways had been divergent. This friend whom once he had conjured by had become to him an excuse for jealous rage; this friend, a friend no longer, was about to return into his life to make his lordship over him more galling by his presence. That school-boy drubbing had been the little leaven that had long lain dormant but was now leavening the whole lump. It rankled in Lemuel's breast yet not less bitterly than when the pain of it was in his body; from that all the line of his buffetings and failures by lineal issue descended, all the anguish of his comparative inferiority went back to that and were burdened upon it, all the hate and jealousy and resentment and pessimism in his heart found their object of aversion in him who had given him his first pain and first defeat. Were triumph and defeat then de-

terminated fatalities between them? Should they never stand on even ground and fight the issue over again? He recalled the motto that used to hang in the big assembly hall at school just above the domine's head and which he used to spell out during prayers when he first got on terms with the Latin conjugations; it was printed on a scroll across the breast of a painted eagle flamboyant, the legacy of some graduating class which long ago had forgotten both its significance and its Latin—*Finis nondum est*. Not yet, fate was not accomplished, they should have a new probation—some day. Life was not unprofitable and spent with this assurance. Its sweet and gentle things were lost, he could never turn back to gather them; hope, ambition for them all was dead, buried with the purposeless life he had lived until this hour. But he should live that life no longer. He was a new man, the blood rushed wildly through his veins, every fibre tingled and strained with the spirit of his new genesis. There is a time to build up and a time to tear down, there is a double way to equity; he had been a driveling Loyalist but he was now Jacobite, revenge should be sweeter than achievement, nihilism than enjoyment, destruction better than possession. The end was not yet, not until he had crushed and humbled this evil genius of his life. Then at last he should be satisfied. Oh, life, sweet life, until that terminal day of all his hopes should come! He would go to Susie's.

If Lemuel had had any misgivings about the way Susie would receive him they were quickly dissipated when he reached her apartment. Nothing could have been at once more conventional and cordial than her welcome. It was not the conventionality



of Trumbull Court, there was a graceful deference to their maturer years and long separation, he admired the *savoir faire* of the little lady who could so gracefully adapt herself to the proprieties of an occasion. He was such a stolid, inelegant fellow himself he never knew how to give things their proper significance and take occasions deftly; he generally took them by the horns when he was forced into taking them at all and was thrown in consequence.

"I'm glad you've come early," said Susie, rising to greet him as he was announced, "there is no one here but Hugh, and we can have a sociable time in the gloaming before others arrive, who will no doubt bring their sociability with them. I hope you have grown just a little sentimental, Mr. Leete, or I shall have to call for lights. You remember Hugh?"

At this mention of his name a large man, who had been leaning upon the window seat, stepped forward. The two friends of other days clasped hands and exchanged a few conventional remarks of welcome, but there seemed no spontaneity in their greeting and the conversation fell to Lemuel and Susie.

Why, Lemuel asked himself, had this man received a greater fulness of life than himself? Was he stronger or taller, were his shoulders broader, his neck thicker, his chest deeper, his limbs straighter, than were his own? No, they were merely fulfilling the fates that had been repeated over their several births. But Lemuel would take issue with fate, by the token of his new manhood new fates should be uttered for him to-night.

"You have a very pretty home here," he said. He was embarrassed to know what to say, with nothing from which to take a cue; he knew so little about

Susie he feared he might get on debatable ground unless he kept to commonplaces. "I suppose Trumbull Court seems like a very hideous place now."

"No, it don't, not nearly so hideous as when I had to live in it. I don't say I should want to go back, I don't think I should unless I could go and be a little girl again ; but the old Court holds a very warm place in my heart. *Ce mauvais monde*, it is very enticing, but it is not one-half so honest and kind and comfortable as was the Court, isn't that true?"

"I don't know," answered Lemuel, "I'm not on very close terms with the naughty world."

"Oh, you always were an anchorite ; but you live in it, you are a denizen of its naughtiest and giddiest whirl, you certainly have an opinion. Am I not right?"

"I think not when you say the Court was more comfortable. Virtue was a disturbing creed there ; here creeds and traditions and everything else are tossed into a common pot and no one need smell the stew unless he likes. We have a social autonomy and it's a great deal more comfortable than the old, plaguing superstition that things ought to be better than they are."

"And you've thrown the traditions you received into the common charnel? What a turnabout you've been !"

"I don't say just that. I've tried to do it for the sake of peace, but I can't discard convictions so easily ; my bringing up was too stiff."

They chatted on very pleasantly. Susie's manner was easy and cordial, but Lemuel saw that anything like confidence was hopeless. Every far-away at-

tempt of his to learn too much she turned aside with a deftness he admired as much as he regretted.

And now her visitors began to arrive, the *bons esprits* she had promised with dainty suggestion ; callow youths from the clubs, sleek-shaven men from the Rialto, men of good family and men of no family, at least of record ; sporty gents and proper dandies, but all admirers of the coy little lady who kept open house for their entertainment, and all wadded and primed with the stuff-current to prove their fraternity with the merry order of true sports. Hugh was the same, silent, watchful man in play he had been before. The garrulousness and levity of the rest provoked no response in him. The checks that he dispensed for the stuff-current came back to him in the fall of the cards ; that was what he was there for. With a sort of desperation Lemuel contested fortune with him ; it was of no use. Hugh's star was still in the ascendant. But he could not go on triumphing forever. Fortune was Janus-faced : now Lemuel saw only her frown, but in the whirligig of revenges he should bask in her favor. He knew it and was comforted.

It was after midnight when Lemuel returned to his own room. He was heated with excitement and exercise. The air inside stifled him, he threw wide the sash and sat down by the window. The night was black and on it floated an odor of mold and dampness from the turgid city. The brown-faced houses and block-paved streets showed spectrally out of the darkness like monuments of the countless passengers who by day had trod to and fro, to and fro in the busy thoroughfare. Wrapt now in death's rehearsal shroud these weary passengers slept as quietly in their cham-

bers within the spectral houses as the mummies in Necropolis.

Gradually there stole over Lemuel the memory of a night long forgotten when he had sat thus dreamily by the window of his little room back in Trumbull Court. The brown-faced houses grew more spectral and white and slunk together into one big manse with huge columns and a high porch. The streets expanded till they lost their separateness and became one vast enclosure, full of dark trees and high, tangled herbage. The moldy smell grew more oppressive: it was the rotting of the corpses down in the big house, and no one could bury them until the fate of Doom House be accomplished. Was poor rattle-bone Agnes there, he wondered, among the decaying plunder; or had she at last succeeded in passing all her joints through the fence and making off, as he used to be in imminent terror of her doing? Very likely she was gone; since his father died the abutting tenants might not be so scrupulous about keeping up the fences. He did not feel very sure about Agnes, of whom he had never had any better evidence than heresay. But the bogieman was more real to-night than ever, he had been no myth sure enough but a very substantial fellow. He had a familiar look too, though he was not like the old bogie and he crept through the trees much more clumsily than the elfish chap of long ago.

There must surely have been ample forage in the Close for him to grow so prodigiously. He was of Calibanish hugeness, and tawny like those whom Phœbus touches; his beard was black and square and stiff, and his watery chops drooled gluttonously over it. Before him lay in the grass a beautiful woman. Her white robe, wet with dew, alone

shrouded her fairness from the stars that dimpled above her, and a red and cruel scar on her upturned breast told orisons to the vengeance that is in heaven. Perhaps this was poor Agnes, but he thought it was like Irene. Strange little woman of his boyish romance, at once so young and so old, what kind cruelty had at last set her free? In all these years since he had used to venture clandestinely into her jail liberties, he only remembered her as some far-away, Madonna-like creature, too pure for earth, too pure even for his devotion, like one of God's own angels. But now his heart kindled for her, to see her so forlornly laid. Was it really Irene, he wondered. He must go closer, he would know. But just then the bogieman stooped over, and sucking in her delicate body, crunched it between his great teeth, while his wee eyes twinkled and flashed, and the drool of his morsel ran out by the corners of his mouth. Lemuel's heart bounded against his breast. He would smite the ogrous fiend and deliver at least the mangled pieces of the victim from him. But as he was going to strike there was no antagonist; monster and morsel had glided away; the fate of Doom House had been fulfilled, and he saw only the brown-faced houses and block-paved streets again, staring at him wanly as they had before.

Lemuel yawned. It was a strange vision, was it prophetic? Must his enemy escape him at the last? Was there not a time set for this man as for the house that was cursed, when he should fall his prey, his very own, to compensate him for all his years of wretchedness, as Samson was comforted by the slaughter of the Philistines? His whole heart cried out, Yes. Meanwhile a word had been repeated to

him, whose very utterance grew into a passion—Irene, what of her? did she live? did she need him? Oh, the world was full of promise!

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## CHAPTER XV.

### AFTER TEN YEARS.

*Ruy Blas* (à part, et se parlant à lui-même.)

Que faire?—Elle d'abord! Elle avant tout!—rien qu'elle!  
 Dût-on voir sur un mur rejaillir ma cervelle,  
 Dût le gibet me prendre ou l'enfer me saisir!  
 Il faut que je la sauve!—oui! mais y réussir?  
 Comment faire? donner mon sang, mon cœur, mon âme  
 Ce n'est rien, c'est aisé. Mais rompre cette trame!  
 Deviner . . .—deviner! car il faut diviner!—  
 Ce que cet homme a pu construire et combiner!

—*Victor Hugo.*

THE hot, sweltering dog-days were upon the crowded city and were giving the impetus of flight to even the last tarrying of those annual exodants who are fledged with the comfortable feathers of fortune one needs at seaside and mountain. Lemuel had always congratulated himself as a sensible fellow for not being troubled by this periodical stampede. He had insisted that New York was a more comfortable and profitable place to summer in than nine-tenths of the vagrants who abandoned it found in exchange. For his part he found the town more enjoyable in summer than in winter, or rather to give

proper deference to his temperament, he found it more endurable, enjoyment as an exhilarating experience being something out of his line. He did business with the same regularity as at any time, he took a grim satisfaction in working when everyone else was lazy. If he felt disposed, he ran down to one of the local resorts and sniffed the salt air with as much relish as the big bugs who had gone to more outlandish breathing places. When he did not care to go out of the city there were plenty of varieties at home, which such a Bohemian as he could enjoy, even though all his friends were away. He went his way and asked no odds of anyone.

But all that was changed now. His former arguments were of no value. The city had become a veritable jail, its air was suffocating, its diversions flat; a fever of flight was upon him. "Carpe diem—tempus fugit," the trite old Latin that his green-witted preceptor had used to din thanklessly into his head at school rushed back to him with a moral and a meaning. Twenty and eight, twenty and eight—the words rang over and over in his mind like a solemn monition. Time was overmellow already for the plucking, the best fruits had fallen and there was left only the aftermath. But he would waste no more of his life, he would cast off the lethargy of diffidence and despair that had crept like an insidious disease upon him, he would adventure once more into the world, to win or die, to be a fellow with his fellows, and it should go hard but the world would treat with him.

It was ten years since Lemuel had left Trumbull Court. In all that time he had not once been back to it, he had not cared to go, he had promised himself he never would, lest it curse him again for a

greater dullard. He felt toward it no loyalty of birth, the few fond friends he had had there gave him no endearment for it, they were not personal to the place. But what were promises now? He was a new man, born under new auspices; the old man was dead, he had spiked the last nail in his coffin. By his new genesis he was resolved of all vows and disabilities. Where he had been timid, now he was bold; where rational, now he was heedless; he feared neither man nor woman nor sign nor augury. A frenzy had possessed him—Irene, what of her? Her name filled him with mad desire, her beatified vision like a bright and blessed monitor had burst into the firmament of his darkening life, chiding him of sloth and weakness. Then came back to him the scripture his old grandfather used to repeat when they sat together at the romance hour up among the relics of the sea, “And it shall come to pass that at eventime there shall be light!” Were the words prophetic of himself too? was Irene his symbolical Venus, his lightbringer, his morning star? When his life had seemed the darkest her remembrance had risen upon it. Assurance of prophecy grows more assured. The dawn cometh, the fates of darkness have been fulfilled, the fates of light shall prevail, Irene is the angel of his better life and sponsor of his victory. He will go to her though it be to the ends of the earth, he will know what this wild passion means, he will prove the vision, whether it has flesh and feeling, he will cry to it, whether it will answer him. He arranged his business for an indefinite absence; he might be gone a week or a month or a year, but until this spirit of unrest was cast out he was unfit to work.

Faster and faster raced the train across the



Connecticut meads, the objects of the landscape flew past in undistinguishable confusion. Lemuel turned restlessly in his chair. To him the train was a sluggard. His heart had bounded on before. Already in visionary perspective he was entering the Court. How would it be changed he wondered. Would there be anyone who would know him, anyone who could tell him of her? Perhaps his metropolitan fashion would make him as outlandish in the old cloister as was the venerable Rip Van Winkle when he returned from his famous spree. Perhaps the children would troop mockingly after him, perhaps there would be no one who could answer him of her. Then would he become a vagrant on the earth until he found her; though he were Ishmael he would be blessed.

At last the train drew lazily into New London; now he was close to his journey's end, Lemuel did not fret at the dallying pace. Had the train come in with a rush and a roar it would have been such a violation of his association with the town that he would have cast it for an omen of his confusion.

It was evening, a briny heaviness was in the air, the boats at their ridings swung as solemnly as they used to in the buried past. He blessed the hopeful augury. The town had been true to its traditions of permanence and had scored the decade only on the docket of its almanac.

Nothing could be done that night but to find a hostelry. Till morning then farewell to the world of worry, hail to dreamland and its gossamer folk!

## CHAPTER XVI.

IRENE “AN ANGEL FROM GOD’S FIRMAMENT.”

If these, these things can thee move  
Come live with me and be my love.

—*Marlowe.*

THE next morning found Lemuel astir bright and early. The sun was shining cheerily, the air was crisp and glorious, the great world sparkled with auroral beauty. Lemuel’s heart bounded to nature’s cheer. He breathed the air in long, free draughts, he walked out into the blessed brightness with great swinging strides, only the habitual decorum of his metropolitan residence kept him from running and leaping as he used to when a lad. Once more he felt the exhilaration of living, once more life was an experience and not a reduction, and the day-spring was oracle of his prosperity. He wandered down by the waterside and visited Goggin’s wharf, now known by another name and occupied by fish-mongers’ stalls. It seemed but yesterday when he had romped about the familiar places. He went back to his hotel and ate his breakfast with a relish; he had not felt so hearty and so happy in a very long time.

Now he was near his quest, delay was not so goading. It was the middle of the forenoon when at last he found himself in Trumbull Court. Curiously he looked around him for the ancient landmarks—his old home, Mrs. Doane’s, Mullin’s alley with its delusive flagging. Everything looked much as it used to, except that there was an intruding

suggestion, not attributable to anything in particular, that the neighborhood was running down. The old distinctive respectability that had sequestered the Court from all the world had perished with the decadence of those who had been its conspicuous ritualists. True, some of the old stock whom Lemuel had known still remained, but their dynasty was weak and expiring; the vulgar popularizers who recked not of the good old times had crept in and hybridized the conservative morals of the neighborhood.

But the Court was not the Mecca of Lemuel's pilgrimage, he bore it no loves and gave it no tears. Down at the farther end he saw the high-picketed gate with the grass patch in front, where on a lazy summer afternoon, almost a score of years ago he had first seen Irene. The big enclosure of Windham House was just as dismal and forbidding as it had used to be in those days, the trees rustled as funereally, the grass grew as rankly, the big white house glimmered as sepulchrally down the abandoned drive; the eternal hills had not been more perpetual. The blessed sun, the laughing morn, could not cure its grim and savage desolateness. But was Irene there? Could it be that the subtle flame of life that had burned so gently in her she scarcely seemed to belong to earth, but to be an angel from heaven, could it have endured so long and not have perished in its unwholesome durance? Perhaps she had escaped and was free, far beyond his following; perhaps she was dead, murdered or self-murdered in that secret place, without ever knowing the sweetest felicities of life, like the beautiful Cenci, finding in death a blessed deliverance; perhaps alas!—for no men build fences but who have something to keep, and there have been strange tales

of Windham House—perhaps like Beatrice, she had suffered worse than death in that hideous place.

He passed around to the spot where he used to make his clandestine entrances to Irene’s bower, when he had been a beardless Romeo. The very picket, which after many misgivings, he had unnailed at the bottom in those former days to permit his free going and coming was there just as he had left it. He wondered if Irene had kept it so in memorial of him. He pressed it and it swung to one side. How many times as a gamin he had crawled through there and pulled it into place after him! He smiled as he thought of trying to intrude his present bulk through such an opening, he would need to knock off a couple more of pickets. Such an entrance would seem skulking to him now, it was not the way a man and particularly a courtier should come. He seized the limb of a sturdy tree that grew at hand and swung himself to the rail of the fence from which he dropped to the ground within. For a moment he paused to recall the first time he had ever entered there, how all his boldness had deserted him the moment he was inside and he would have given the world to be out again. He believed his heart beat as fast to-day as it had then, but they were no guardians of Windham House, whether real or mythical, who terrified him now; no, it was the same gentle Irene whose round, blue eyes had turned him into a gawking fool before, all guileless as she was of his latter confusion, being present only in his fancy. He wondered if their trysting place was still beneath the trees, if she ever visited it and thought of him. He would go there first, in its associations he could draw closer to her, his heart would be made more reverent, his courage be hard-

ened, after which he would march up to her detainers in their rotten old fortress and retrieve her in true Hellenic fashion, always providing, of course, she was there to deliver.

He made his way to the upland knoll where he had used to meet Irene. He approached as quietly as if he were entering an hallowed enclosure; the soft ground, matted by the long accumulated fallings of the clustering trees, answered not a sound to his tread. It was only a few steps until he emerged from the shadow of the trees into the open of the old spot and the picture, which for ten long years had been only a memory, jumped gloriously before him—the magnificent harbor, reaching away in hazy distance to the blue Sound and bluer Ocean; the great, frowning ships and cranky skiffs; the green lawns and pretty cottages of Pequot; the turretted walls of Trumbull which smiled a truce in the morning sun, and the grim façade of Griswold, still in shadow, perched on the hill down which the traitorous Arnold trundled his countrymen. For the first time in all his life Lemuel realized something of the blessed meaning of nativity. He had been into a far country, he had sojourned among strangers and been fed with their husks, but now he had returned; here was his home, his fatherland; every bird that chirped, every bee that hummed seemed to call his name in its own weird speech and bid him welcome home. Out in the crowding world he had been nothing, owned nothing, loved nothing; here every creature, every inanimate thing in nature which he used to know, seemed to belong to him and love him and greet him.

But most jocund sight of all, she was there, Irene, his love, his fairy queen. Scarcely a dozen paces

before him on the grassy banks of their old rendezvous she sat looking wistfully out over the water. The years that had changed her from a girl to be a perfect woman had not changed her beyond his recognition. She looked just like the Irene his fancy had conjured. She was dressed in a dark habit of almost severe simplicity; her face half-turned from him, was like the beautiful Madonna’s; only for the brown hair that rippled amorously over her forehead she might have been an angel errant from God’s great firmament.

He was as undiscovered as he was an unexpected trespasser; she had not heard him and he hesitated where he stood, watching her with that eager passion that longed yet doubted to burst boldly in and tell her all itself. Patiently he waited. At last the nameless spell of his persistent gaze crept over her; with a little shock her thoughts rushed back from their wandering, she turned and saw him. With a half-stifled cry she sprang up, her face was strangely pale, her clasped hands clutched convulsively. Oh, wretched, rash, intruding fool that he was! she knew him not. He tried to speak, to beg her not to blanch and tremble so, to pour forth the words that were burning on his tongue; but he was dumb, his tongue rattled incoherently in his mouth. At last the goading unrest that had driven him to seek her should be quelled forever; he had found her and he was a monster in her sight. Dejectedly he turned away.

“Lemuel!”

Was she calling him? or was his excited imagination jesting with him? it was so weak and plaintive, this little cry. Perhaps she was in trouble and needed him, perhaps his hope had not all been vain.

He turned and looked at her. Her tall body was swaying with her agitation. Her white face was set rigidly toward him, but it expressed more than terror now, it told of suffering and doubt and all the warring emotions that can dismay a woman's soul; conviction was struggling with doubt, struggling and won. She knew him! The birds and the bees had been true sponsors of her greeting after all, he might go to her.

"Irene!" He sprang to her side, his great arms clutched her as if she was some venomous Medusa he would strangle and not the most innocent and gentle creature in the world. His hot lips quivered a little way, a very little way above hers so pale and faltering. "Tell me," he cried, "you do not fear me now? you do not hate me? you know me—Lemuel—long ago? I love you, I have come to save you, to take you from this hellish place; come with me, let me love you—will you, will you?" In the madness of his love the unconsidered words had burst from him before the sober second thought could check them. He had wooed like a boor, he had told all he had not intended to tell and had probably frightened his Dulcinea out of all proper show of indignation. O Quixote redive! his ears were just as long as they had always been. He relaxed his embrace and felt a very limp cavalier.

But see, she is smiling up to him, just like the little laughing Irene of long ago; he scarcely dared to believe it at first, the greeting flitted to her face so doubtfully, but now he is assured of it. He plucks up his sinking courage, he is glad after all his troublesome secret is out. "I frightened you? No wonder. Your thoughts were a long way off from me."

The smile faded from her lips.

"Not so far perhaps as you think, Lemuel," she answered.

"No? What was that ancient stuff we used to read in school, 'Latet anguis in herba?' Don't you think you can fit the proverb on me?"

She laughed. "Why, you are not a snake, are you?"

"I hope not," he answered, "nor Satan masquerading as one."

They sat on the green bank together, and told each other the chronicle of the years since they had parted. They were children once more. Her heart was as fond, her life as pure as in the old days—this one thing he knew, it was enough; the rest he was willing to leave to time and chance. Whether or no the unrolling future should bring him deeper revelation of the secrecy that had clouded her life and made her stranger to all the world, he little cared; he had found her and with her he was content.

The waves plashed a merry choral along the rocks at their feet, they dimpled and danced in happy measure away in the offing where the white ships sailing yon sank beneath the blue horizon. Lemuel remembered the complaint of the Idumæan patriarch, "Now are my days swifter than a post, they flee away and see no good; they are passed away as the swift ships." His own days were passing like those ships, unfreighted to the dim frontier of the unknown world. Surely it was a little time he had been voyaging and yet he was well on his way. Twenty and eight and the end all unmeasured, his course all uncharted. But the end was not yet; he had a destiny unfulfilled, there was reprisal



ahead and salvage of the sea, Irene should be his spoils of love; across the blue offing of life they should pass together, together sink from the sea of time into the ocean of eternity, blessed at last in unity for the buffets of the time that had gone.

"Tell me, Irene," said Lemuel, "—surely I may call you Irene—how has the world used you since I have been away?"

"Not so well as it has used you," she answered, looking at him with proud admiration, just as his mother did when she called him her big, strong boy, and tried to conjure him out of his despondent fits.

"Come, come," said Lemuel, "this is poor reward of my coming to joke me so. I didn't ask you how the world had used me, I know too well how niggardly it has been with its favors, I want to know how it has treated you."

"Well truly," said Irene, "the world and I have been such very poor chums, I cannot say it has treated me at all."

"Then you persist in your deplorable habit of giving the world the cold shoulder?"

"Do you mean deplorable?" The question was unexpected and he did not know how to answer it. "Say rather commendable!" she exclaimed. "No, not that either, for there's no commendation where there's no will to do or don't. The world has no humanity or religion that is large enough to embrace me, so I don't see as I have any choice as to what shoulder to give it. I have been far enough into the world to know I am not wanted there; I am the guest without the wedding garment, and I might as well resign myself to the outer darkness first as last and save myself the ignominy of being cast out after I have smelt the flavor of the wedding feast. There

are a few poor families down in the town to whom I am sometimes able to offer little charities; they are a rought sort of folk, but at least they do not make the odious distinctions of their betters. Sometimes I feel more guilty than charitable when I go to them, for I know I go as much for the sake of their companionship as to do them good. That is all I see of the world. Oh, Lemuel! do you wonder I am weak and stupid and wicked and lack every grace that adorns a woman when I am shut out from everyone who could make me better?”

“I wonder you are not,” he answered fervently, touching her hand.

“No, Lemuel,” she said, drawing away from him, “please don’t do that, and don’t talk to me as you did, it will hurt us both; it hurts me, oh, cruelly.”

“Hurts?” he exclaimed reproachfully.

“Yes,” she answered, “don’t misunderstand me. The sweetest words hurt sometimes. You knew me once, never mind how long ago, I am afraid to count; we were chums in that ancient time; perhaps—but never mind what we thought; there is a great difference that divides us now. Perhaps the difference was hardly less then, but we did not understand it. You have been into the world, you have learned its graces and its faults; I have stayed here and learned nothing. The world is a mysterious wonderland to me which I never shall explore and never want to. If this place, which has long kept me so secure from harm, will continue as kind a refuge, it is all I ask. The foolish ambitions I used to dream of have all perished as I have learned their hopelessness; they are as dead as the flowers to which I told them and the better part of myself perished with them. I am cold and unfeeling now, love has no meaning to me;

death no terrors, I have learned the last lesson of life, resignation ; and so, like the Roman gladiators, I greet you to-day ' *Moritura saluto.*' The words have no sad foreboding—" she hesitated, he saw the glistening tears struggle to her eyes, " Oh, Lemuel !" she cried, " they had not until you came and turned my life backward to the better times and the deceptive dreams which I thought were banished forever. Oh, you have been unkind, the cruelest of my tormentors !" She gave a great sob as if her heart would break. She sprang up from where she sat beside him, he saw she was going but he could not speak, he dared not stop her. She took two or three steps away from him, then she paused and slowly turned toward him. He was at her side in an instant. " Lemuel," she said ; her speech was not hot and furious as it had been, but calm and serious, " you will forgive me, will you not ? You do not know all, but you know enough and have charity enough, I believe, to read between the lines and understand that what I have said was driven from me. I had to tell it to you, for your—for our sake. I am glad you remembered me. You have made the struggle I had fought out all the harder to win again ; but never mind, still I am glad you came. I have remembered you many, many times since you have been away, I was thinking of you when you came and the good God brought you to me when I believed you were far away. But you must not stay. Forget the words you have spoken, forget me, remember only the little Irene of long ago, who is dead and buried somewhere in this unholy place. Only remember her. Good-bye."

" Good-bye ? never !" How could she struggle with him, his arms were so tight about her ! " You

shall not go, you need me, you love me, tell me that—you love me!"

"I dare not."

"Dare be damned. Heaven help the man that frightens you. You love me?"

She looked up into his face, her lips moved; he did not hear what she said, he did not care, he knew his answer. "Then never go back there," he said, "come with me and be my love. Do not think of me, dearest, as I used to be long ago, but as I am now. Why, don't you see I am a man—and you're a woman? Who will harm you with me? Come."

"I cannot, Lemuel."

"Never?"

"No—perhaps never; surely not now; let me go please, if you love me."

"Not unless I may come again to see you."

"No, Lemuel, don't; I cannot promise to see you, this is a lonely place, someone might harm you," he smiled broadly at her fears, the days when Windham Close could terrify him had passed long ago. "I see you are headstrong," said she, "then do this: if I can see you I will tie a red string on the fence where you used to come in. I am playing suggestively close to a certain Rahab, you think? never mind, people have accused me of learning more than that from her. If the string is there, come, all is safe. I'll be here."

"And if it is not there, I'll come and rip the four walls out of Doom House to find you, it's about time I knew what is in that infamous pile."

"No, no, Lemuel, not without the signal."

"Well, well, I'll watch for it."

"Don't forget. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, darling." He had time to press one

passionate kiss to her cheek before she sprang away, and vanished among the trees like a deer of the forest.

Lemuel walked slowly back to the place at which he had entered. With a kick he sent flying a couple of the pickets next to the one that used to cover his secret visits. He was reckless, he did not care who discovered the place of his coming and going, there were not men or devils enough in Doom House to hinder him. He felt like Hercules, as if he could tear up the great, sombre trees to arm himself.

A host of thoughts were crowding tumultuously into his mind. Irene was in trouble, it took no divination to see that. But what trouble? Something more than the cruel exclusion she had always borne in patience, something the very day and hour were pregnant of, and might deliver in a belching birth. Some terrifying menace, imminent as the sword of Damocles, was hanging over her. What it was he could only guess, but his guessing had the conviction of certainty. There are some things even fools do not have to be told, for they have gone into the make-up of the human race ever since Adam and Eve started a family on the outskirts of Eden. The cage had kept his bird all these dallying years, and to-morrow, next day, he knew not how soon, she might be gone; he should call her and the dismal walls would only echo her name in the places where she had been, or worse, he should find her—too late. He remembered Agnes.

The little Irene he had left ten years before, scarcely in the dignity of long skirts, had come to the blossom of perfect womanhood. In her solitary nunnery she had grown into rare and perfect beauty, as pure and spiritual as her own pure heart. The

arts and hypocrisies of life, the guile that beauty traffics in, were all unknown to her. Why did she live on in neglected seclusion when every delight that is germane to a woman's soul awaited her in the world? What did the invidious comments that passed about her in the Court amount to? She could afford to pooh-pooh at them. The world is wide, men give more credit to sight than heresay. She could command admiration and festivity, every antithesis of what she now suffered she might enjoy. Then why not? What was the secret thing that explained her life?

He remembered the story the old dame gossips of the Court used to tell, with the connivance no doubt of those who knew better. He had never believed the yarn, he believed it now less than ever. Neither for duty nor contrition had Irene been brought up in this generous but solitary comfort. The evil Bar-bette was only a stool pigeon for those who were more evil than she. Doubtless there were men in the world who knew the way to Doom House, passionate, determined men, strong men, men of vehement persuasion, who would not be balked of their desires. They knew Irene, they had seen her beauty, and seeing was wanting and wanting, how could it help being having, there in that desolate, infamous den?

Why had Irene forbidden him to come? Did she think his mad and jealous love could walk the sleepy streets, doubting of her welfare? Did she think he was a fool, to have found her in the nick of season and throw away all his pains by a little sentimental dallying? He would go to Windham House that very night, whether or no, he would break in the door of that whited dungeon, he would rifle it of its

treasure, he would carry Irene away like Europa, willy-nilly, he would see who dared stop him. So should she be his contraband of love, and they should live happy ever after.

By this time Lemuel was among the city streets for he had been walking fast, and the strange, deluding spell of Windham Close was wearing away under the dispelling potency of the unheroic things about him, just as we guffaw at the conjurations of a medium when we get out of his seance chamber into the clear optics of day. What a fuddling fool he was anyway! After all his brave words the tokens of his assinine generation only flopped more hopelessly than ever. He had rather have horns and be a real devil. Perhaps there was some hope for him in the impish direction. Here he was, twenty and eight years old, dreaming just the same extravagant and daring things as he used to when a lad. Doubtless too they would fizzle out just as pitifully as his juvenile romances. Irene had simply displayed her constitutional good sense when she had told him not to come unless he was asked. She knew he would only slop over and make her the inconvenience of having his Calibanish bulk swept out, if he did not do her any greater injury. What warrant had he anyway for believing she cared anything for him? He ought to know better than believe anything he heard in that sinister place. Doubtless she had given him the equivocal assurances she did for the sake of letting him down lightly, or of getting him out diplomatically, as he would be a clumsy mess to haul off the premises. She was thinking of him? aha! Speak of the devil and—yes, perhaps she was thinking of him, he wouldn't accuse her of lying. But he could accuse her of duplicity; he had always known, even in his

most daft moments, that flesh and blood had no inheritance in Windham House ; he was courting a sure-enough fairy, all the arts of necromancy and wiles of hell were playing havoc with his never-too-ordered brain. *Facilis descensus Averni*, just as slippery as ever and Windham House is the entrance thereto.

Lemuel strode rapidly toward his hotel.

But the things we love are not so lightly put from us by sophistry. As if to spite him there rose into his memory the old fancy he used to dozingly dream in Mrs. Doane’s parlor about the boys and girls on the green-paper lamp-shade. He could see the picture just as plainly now as when it used to be visibly before him. The tall, lank boy was still himself, and the girl who held his hand was Irene. Somehow their destinies must be united yet. Yes, he would go to Windham House to-night, he would find whether he were under enchantment or not, he would watch from the shadow of the trees that grew nearest the house ; if Irene were a real Irene, if she were threatened with human dangers, and cried for help, he would be ready ; if not, he would come away with no one the wiser.

The evening found Lemuel in Windham Close. Where the trees grew closest to the end of the high porch he loitered. The night was black as Egypt, there was no moon and a raw cold scuff blew in from the sea that blotted out the sky and made even the harbor lights look wan and feeble. Lemuel might have walked freely through the Close without danger of detection, but the trees gave him a feeling of greater security ; moreover the east wind did not penetrate there so chilly.

Windham House showed no light except in a



single room, and here the shades were tightly drawn within. Once in a while he could see a shadow cross the shades, but apparently the room was lit by more than one light for the shadows were never distinct. Once he stole out and stood close beneath the window. His conscience smote him, he felt like an eavesdropper. He heard a mumble of conversation within, the deep growling of a man's voice, a very big man too if it could be judged by his tone as it is of dogs; Lemuel could not distinguish the words and soon all was quiet again; whether the talking ceased or had merely become inaudible from his position he did not know. He went back to his position in the trees, but though he waited long he was rewarded with no further knowledge. By-and-by the light was put out and the big house became once more dark and silent like itself. It was useless for him to stay any longer. He felt of his clothes, they were heavy with moisture; he was cold and down-hearted and worried. What had his coming amounted to? Nothing. What had he expected it to amount to? He hardly knew, but he could not repress a dismal feeling of disappointment. One thing however he had learned, if that was any consolation: he had found confirmation of the things he dreaded. There were denizens of Windham House, as much more terrible as they were more real than those with which he had used to tenant it. There were men of like passions with himself in its secret chambers, whose desires must run rival to his, but to no good.

He strayed back to his hotel and went perturbedly to sleep.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## LEMUEL TALKS WITH BARBETTE.

*Le Laquais.*

Cet argent,—voilà ce qu'il faut que j'ajoute,—  
Vient de qui vous savez pour ce que vous savez.

*Don César.*

(Satisfait de l'explication)

Ah !

*Le Laquais.*

Nous devons, tous deux, être fort réservés.  
Chut !

*Don César.*

Chut !!!—Cet argent vient.—la phrase est magnifique—  
Redites-la-moi donc.

*Le Laquais.*

Cet argent. . .

*Don César.*

Tout s'explique !

Me vient de qui je sais.

*Le Laquais,*

Pour ce que vous savez.

Nous devons.

*Don César.*

Tous les deux !!!

*Le Laquais.*

Être fort réservés.

*Don César.*

C'est parfaitement clair.

—*Victor Hugo's "Ruy Blas."*

THE next morning Lemuel was up with the sun and going down to the harbor soon found a waterman who had boats to let. "Hello," he called, "bring me up your best skiff and be smart about it."

The waterman, being as unaccustomed to such peremptory demands for his wares as he was to matutinal visits from politely dressed strangers, and being a rather fat-witted fellow withal, calmly scratched his head and did nothing but eye Lemuel interrogatively from head to foot.

"You poor, addle-headed old chromo," exclaimed Lemuel, "don't you know what I said?"

The waterman did not act as if he was at all sure he did. "Which boat d'ye want, sir?" he asked.

Lemuel glanced over the assortment; they were an indifferent lot. "Bring me that clinker-built there," he said, pointing to a bowing-bowed yawl tied to a corner of the float.

"Aye, thet'll float ye," ejaculated the little waterman, rolling his eyes over Lemuel approvingly, "an' a rattling good sea boat she be too; able, sir, a terrible able boat, sir; she'll float yer like a merchantman."

"She'd better or you'll get no hire for her," growled Lemuel.

"Ha, ha," laughed the waterman with a squeaky cackle of his lungs, as he led the boat alongside his float, "you're a wag, ho-ho! a merry chap, I'll be blamed, though you'd never look it—a stranger hereabouts I doubt?"

"Yes," said Lemuel.

"Thought I'd never seen ye afore. Strangers ain't so plentiful round yere. Ye're acquaint with boats though; in the navy, I doubt?"

Lemuel gave a grunt which the man evidently took for an assent, for he went on: "Nothing less'n Cap'n, o' course—Gad, but I'd hate to be ketched out agin yer. Got friends in town, I doubt, distinguished relations?"

“Pass in those oars,” demanded Lemuel, “and if you don’t stop that prattle of yours I’ll come ashore and drop you overboard, which will spoil all the fishing in the harbor until you are dragged out, I doubt,” with which fling of repartee, he gave the boat a push that sent it far out from the float, and rowed vigorously away.

“I swun,” muttered the old waterman, going back to his work of punching oakum into the seams of one of his most dilapidated bottoms; and then, as if the matter were altogether too distracting to be so readily dismissed, he paused with his mallet upraised, and looked once more after his cumbersome piece of floating stock that was diminishing down the harbor amid such a slopping of froth and foam from its bows as it had not splashed in many a cruising day. “I swun,” he said again, and his mallet came down on his chisel with a whack that sent the surprised oakum into the seams in very self-defence.

The morning was breaking brightly, but the gossamer haze that hangs on the skirts of night, still rested over the water, giving the climbing sun a ruddy face and playing fantastic tricks with the form and color of distant objects. Lemuel was not long in bringing his boat off Windham Close. There was no one in sight, either on the upland or along the shore. He drew in his oars and let his boat run upon the little patch of beach that offered the only landing among the buttressing rocks. The tide had been at the top of the flood a little after midnight, and was now slack at the ebb. High up on the sloping beach where the tide had reached, there was a mark in the even-washed surface of the sand, as if made by the prow of a boat which had been beached there. Lemuel went up and examined it. It was

sharp and distinct like the mark of a yawl-boat, it could not have been made by one of the flat-iron boats that were common along the coast. Around it were evidences of many footprints, but they were mostly in the soft sand which had not been washed by the tide and were not clearly distinguishable. If the visitors to Windham House whom Lemuel had scented the night before had taken boat here, they had gone away not much later than midnight, taking the ebb tide to drop down the harbor and out to sea. Lemuel nodded his head grimly and went back to his boat. He was soon at the waterman's float again, and settled with that curious dignitary for his hire, throwing in two bits for good measure. He believed he was on the scent, but should he be able to follow the game? Ah, that was the question.

Notwithstanding his appetite was vigorous, Lemuel made short work of breakfast and was off for Windham House. He went first to Irene's bower; he did not find her there nor did he expect to; he went just as he might visit a shrine, simply as an act of reverence; but he only tarried a moment. Windham House was his objective point and to Windham House he went. It was quiet as a tomb. He stepped up on the great front porch; the hollow clatter of his tread startled him, he thought the reverberated sound would never stop in the awful stillness; if there were any occupants of the house they must be awakened by the clamor and rush out upon him, or, if they were of the timid sort, they would be warned of his coming and hide away in cupboards and crevices where he would never find them. But no one came and all grew once again still as before. The great brass knocker that had hung so many years in gaudy idleness stared and grimaced at him

with its uncouth form from the heavy front door. He thought with alarm of the din it would make if he should raise it. "No, old wry-face," he said, addressing the image that embellished it, "I may come to you yet, but there's no use storming the fort until I have to." He walked along the porch and passed around the house on the water side. The kitchen door stood ajar? he stepped up and knocked at it with the effect of sending it open.

"Ah, good morning, Mistress Barbette," he said to the little woman inside, who wheeled around in most evident surprise at his unheralded intrusion. "You don't place me, I see," he continued, perceiving he had caught her with her sails aback, so to speak, "I called up to see Miss Irene; she's well, I suppose?"

"Well'rn some'll be who's looking for her, I think. What do you want?"

"Begging your pardon," answered Lemuel, "I thought I told you."

"You did, did you? And I tell you to get out while you've got a whole skin to take with you."

"Oh, no, no, not so tart as that, Mistress Barbette," said Lemuel, stepping inside the door and seating himself comfortably in a chair that stood at hand.

"Ho-ho, my cock-a-doodle-doo!" exclaimed Barbette, giving him a mock courtesy, "but is it that you will loot the house? One thinks then we have men as big as you who'll have a bit to say on't, and cracked heads are bad ware which you'll be apt to get for your pains."

"Cracked heads is a good game," said Lemuel, "but it takes two to play it; so trot out your big

men, and if there're any heads to crack I'll crack 'em now and over with it."

"Humph!" exclaimed Barbette, disconcertedly.

"Humph!" echoed Lemuel, expanding into a broad grin, "it's a little late to trot out your show, ha? half a night's headway, with a fair tide and a piping breeze puts a bit o' water in the way, and it's a pretty trip to the Indies, don't you think? I know you had some company here last night, fine big chaps with the choler of old Sir Peter in their blood; but they're safe away now, so don't let's bother with them."

"How d'ye know so much?" demanded Barbette. Lemuel smiled.

"Do you think you are the only magician in the world?" he replied, "why I have a smattering of the art myself."

"Who are you?"

"Someone who'd be friends with you if you'd let him," he answered.

"I wouldn't trust you."

"No? Well, I haven't my credentials with me, so I'll have to ask you to take my word for it. Don't you remember me?"

"I never saw you before."

"Oh, yes, you did; I used to play in Windham Close—when I got a chance. But that was a good many years ago, and you and I weren't very chummy, I guess."

"It is not that you are the slip of a lad from the Court who used to come purring around Miss Irene?" exclaimed Barbette.

"The very same, and what is more, I'm purring the same tune yet, only ten times louder."

"Ah, but one thinks you may do that and not

make a frightful noise. You were a decent youngster but a shy one, and, begging your pardon, I never took you to be over and above knowing."

"Ha, ha?" laughed Lemuel, "I believe you are jolly good company if you want to be. Come, now, you don't care a hill of beans for Windham or the next man—you know whom I mean; tell me, is Miss Irene well this morning?"

Barbette looked at him doubtfully.

"Yes," she answered, after some hesitation, "she is."

"She is not up yet, perhaps?"

"She complained of a headache this morning and asked me to let her sleep, that is all."

"Well, I won't ask to see her in that case, but I suppose I can stay and visit with you, Mistress Barbette?"

"I don't know how I can get rid of you," she answered, "though it is small welcome I'm giving you."

"And you don't object to a pipe, I know, do you? It adds to the sociability."

"Smoke away, it's in line with the rest of your impudence."

"Thanks," said Lemuel, lighting with evident satisfaction a smudgy pipe, which he extracted from one of his pockets, "If I lived in this house I'd want to smoke all the time to lay the spooks."

If appearances were any criterion Lemuel did not succeed in ingratiating himself conspicuously with the crusty Barbette; she bustled about her work, giving him scant ceremony and few words. But it was a good deal to be tolerated in her hitherto inviolate domain, and Lemuel felt very well satisfied when at last he knocked out his pipe on the door-



step and said good-bye. To be sure he had not seen Irene and he had promised himself that very morning he would see her whether or no and would walk rough-shod over anyone who ventured to dispute the point with him. In this spirit he had greeted Barbette at first with considerable brusqueness. But the knowledge that those whom he had most to dread were safely away went a good way toward mollifying him ; moreover he had Barbette's word, which he had no reason to doubt, that Irene was safe, and he was not long in concluding that diplomacy fitted the case better than bluster.

It was nine o'clock when Lemuel left Windham House. He could not go back again that day : there was nothing more exciting to do than to stray around among his old haunts and think, and think.

The confederated clocks of the city were striking eleven, with sleepy long-drawn notes, just as the clocks in New London, whether family or public, always strike. The night was clear but dark. As the last stroke of the hour died away, weird, crackling sounds broke the stillness in Windham Close. Surely somebody less deft than the elfish crew that used to gambol there was treading down the rankly-growing underbush. What greedy things lovers are ! the days have not hours enough, the weeks have not days enough to glut their desires. One would think Lemuel might let his mistress sleep at this lecherous hour of night and not come prowling cat-like to her bower to tempt, beneath the subtle spell of darkness, the plunder of her virtue. Ah, Irene was sleeping in her own room as maidenly as any prude. Who then is this he meets ? She is waiting for him, he leads her to a sheltered spot among the trees, he seats himself at her side, he talks

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with her in hushed, eager words, he lingers with her until long after the town clocks have struck midnight and all the demonish things of Windham House, if demonish things it have, should be on their gambols. She is a woman in sooth, but Lemuel is not her lover; poor little Irene, let no jealous dreams disturb you up in your virgin chamber. She is only Barbette, sour, snappish, unsociable Barbette. Truly Lemuel must have practised magically upon her stops in his early morning visit!

“Now as to this lady’s separate property?” Lemuel was saying.

“Oh, the filthy lucre!” exclaimed Barbette, “I know nothing. There were those who said it was the better part of half a million, but one knows there are many liars.”

“Humph!” grunted Lemuel, “a decent sum. In trust you say?”

“To the heirs of her body. If she died without issue, it remained to her kin and heirs at law.”

“Which were?”

“Her husband—she being foreign and an only child.”

“Humph! I see, of course. And she was delicate?”

“Ugh!” Barbette shrugged her shoulders, “Not overmuch. It’s said she was a beautiful lady before her marriage. But the terrible climate—le diable! must she not feel it? Poor lady, I can hear her cries to-day—‘Kill me, give me something; I can’t stand it, I can’t.’ And all her labor for nothing! Had I known what stinking business it was and that the lady could pull through—’twas a long time afterward when I knew she did—it’s not Barbette would have taken the ewe from her breast, no, not for

nurse's wages and a good shipload of gold beside. But Windham himself never meant things to be as bad as they've turned out if his sins hadn't come home to roost faster than he could house them ; he's gone through hell himself, but when one's in the torrent—bah ! what must one do ?”

Lemuel's talk with Barbette had not been in vain. He had learned several things ; and if he had touched the motive of this mercenary and crafty informer, as he believed he had, he had now a confederate of no mean order. But slow and sure is an old proverb and a good one ; there was no crying haste, and he did not underate the guile and device of those he must oppose. He could not have too much help ; he could not prove too fully, though he doubted it not, the dastardly business that had been revealed to him.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

“ HER NAME IS NOT YOUR NAME.”

The night cometh when no man can work.

—*John ix. 4.*

HOW the days raced by, how the sun slipped southward ! It seemed as if the ruddy Phœbus, having rounded the summer solstice, was lashing his team down the declining year at a bound. Summer dashed into autumn, the half-way post of the equinox flew by like a flash, the torrid dallying days of mid-year had all at once turned pinched and crisp, the nights were long and dismal, conjuring up visions of

warm blankets and snug hearths. The fickle moon which had sometime witched the straying lovers, now glided chastily in her course, as if ten thousand repentant cursing fools of her spell did not know what an old seducer she was. Lemuel thought he had never seen such antics with the almanac before, it was more than a month since he had left New York and it seemed but yesterday. And yet it is suspected that the solar system behaved very much as it always does, and that it was the magical little Irene who had so disordered his perceptions, for he had been a constant and unforbidden visitor at Windham House. Windham House had not therefore become a festive place, dispossessed of all its grewsomeness, nor had Mistress Barbette turned into a sociable and mild-mannered virgin; the leopard does not change his spots and Windham House and Barbette were likely to be as faithful to themselves. But at least the old place had seen more cheer, of such a mild and temperate sort as was not wholly incongruous with its reputation, than it had seen in many a long year before.

Irene was all that Lemuel in his most ardent moments had ever imagined her, she was everything he loved in a woman, his passion for her was a tormenting fire in his blood, and yet she seemed almost as far away from him as ever. She liked to have him with her, that he knew; she was a great deal brighter and better and more beautiful than when he had first come to Windham House; she was the best of company too; she liked to ramble with him in the Close or sail with him upon the bay, to talk of old times or play games or do anything, so she was with him; and when he went away all the cheer faded from her life until he came again. She put no

restraint between them, their ways were as free as when they had been children ; and yet he was not satisfied, he was more like a brother than a lover, every time he spoke of love her brightness faded away and she became silent. Sometimes he would see the tears spring up and she would beg him not to talk of that, everything but love and love was all he had come to say. So the days passed one after the other, full of hope, full of delight, but never bringing him his heart's desire. What was the bugbear that balked him ? Was it the secret of her life of which she would never speak ? Was it some delusion bred of her long immurement in that unholy place ? Had she taken the vows of perennial virginity ? Or was—oh, heaven save her ! was she unworthy to listen to the words he had told her ? Damn the past anyway, howsoever black it might have been, he would take her for what she was in the glorious present ; she knew it. Why then did she hold away from him except—why except for the only possible reason, that there was someone in his way, a rival whom she had elected above him or one who had been forced upon her by nefarious contract, in either case an obstacle to all his aspirations. She must confess herself to him, he would dally no longer ; if she loved him no person, no infamy, howsoever heinous, should keep her from him ; if not, the quicker he ended this wild dream the better.

It was one of the bright tonicking days, such as are given in autumn to the patient natives of the northeastern States to compensate them for the climatic vagaries of the rest of the year. The breeze blew softly in from the sea, the bay dappled and spangled, all the world was glorious and gay. Even Windham Close had lost some of its traditional gloominess and

responded to the benignant weather. Lemuel and Irene strayed down the old drive to the little patch of earth where in the long ago days they had used to scatter dandelions and daisies in memory of the poor dead Agnes whom they both loved, she seemed so friendless else.

"Irene," said Lemuel. She looked up to him attentively. He took her hand ; they were standing by Agnes' grave. " You know what I came up here to say to you, what I have said, and you will not let me mention it, you have not answered it. I can't keep silent any longer. Even were I content to wander on in Arcadia with you immortally the conspiracy of other things would not allow it. It is not always summer, it is not always peace, and ships are not always at sea. You understand me Irene, I know you understand me. I am going away to-morrow, whether or not I ever see you again hangs on the word you give me now. The time is coming, I fear, when you will need a friend, a dear friend and a strong one. If that time shall come and you alone shall be unable to drive back the evil that it brings, remember that there was one who would have given everything, even though it were himself, to save you. I speak hotly, pardon me, I speak as I have loved you, as I shall always love you. Though you turn from me, in the secret places of my life where I can do no sin to your more fortunate suitor, I shall love you as I love you now. But I shall never return to you ; I cannot save you except for myself, I cannot put myself between you and every one who raises a hand or speaks a word against you, except by the right which only one man may have and only you can give. Irene, before I go, tell me once for all—do you love me?"

"Must I answer now?" she asked falteringly.

"Yes, now, there is no time to waste."

"I love no one else."

"That is not enough," he exclaimed, "do you love me?"

The tears burst into her eyes, she threw her arms about his neck. "Oh, Lemuel, dear Lemuel," she cried, "I dare not love you. Think what you say, remember what I have been and am; you cannot, you must not love me. Go, forget me, go: but before—you go—" she stroked her fingers across his forehead and through his tangling hair, "I will answer you. I do love you, I have always loved you, and my love has been as pure and faithful as a wife's. Good-bye, do not worry for me when you are gone. I know partly what the evil is you dread for me, but it will never come, for I shall die when you have gone, I shall die true to you, my darling, my husband—this once let me call you that—as I have lived."

"No, Irene," he said smiling down on her, "you will not die, that would be a poor way of loving me, you will live for my sake; and when I have rid you of this vile place and the villains who make it vile, you will forget the lies they have made you believe here and be happy. Why do you want me to remember what you have been? Let the past bury its dead, it was none too kind to either of us and we needn't spend the present to mourn it. I care not a straw what has been, it is enough for me to know you are the purest and dearest girl in the world to-day. But Irene, I will remember what you have not been. Darling, I tell you the truth—the poor Agnes, by whose unmarked, unconsecrated grave we are standing, she was not your mother, her name is not your name. Do not ask me anything more now nor

how I know it, only believe me. Some day perhaps I shall know everything and can tell you everything ; but whether I ever learn all the mystery that is over your life, or not, you will be just the same to me."

" But if, after all, Lemuel, you are mistaken and she was my mother ?"

" If she were a thousand times your mother, or if you had the vilest birth the world is guilty of, I would love you just the same. But I am not mistaken. Can't you trust me ?"

Slowly Irene raised her beautiful face to his and her dark, mysterious eyes, into which he had used to look so wonderingly and see only his dwarfish image, now no longer his taunting minimizers, no longer strange and unfathomed, but deep and liquid as ever, looked up to him, their only diviner, speaking love's eloquence. There was no need for words, for he knew all her meaning ; and stooping down he kissed her. " So," said he, " we seal our covenant. May yonder great sun in whose audience we have spoken, be our heavenly witness ; and the great God who is above all send on us his benediction."

" Lemuel," she said, still clinging to him, " I thought I was strong enough to save you from myself, but when I was alone that night and all the world seemed one great conspiracy against me, then I knew how weak I was and how much I loved you. I cried to you then, just a little cry, you did not hear me but the good God did and sent you to watch in the garden. I have always, always loved you ; during all the years you have been gone I have watched for you and prayed for you, but not selfishly, Lemuel, for I never thought you could love me as I am."

Lemuel spent a long happy day at Windham



House and at its close he bid Irene good-bye and returned to New York. The secret of her lonely life and the plot that was against her had been sufficiently revealed to him since he came to Windham House to put him on his guard against the plotters; but strong and bold as he was in Irene's cause he never could save her single-handed; he must have an ally whom as yet he had not. That ally he believed he could win.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

“HE SHALL NEVER BE MARRIED TO ANOTHER.”

I am black but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem.  
—*Canticles* i. 5.

For love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave.  
—*Canticles* viii. 6.

LEMUEL no sooner arrived in the city and had cleaned himself from his journey than he started off to call on little Susie. He found her rooms without difficulty but then his heart sank, for Susie was not there. Inquiries failed to give him any information, for the movements of her sort are matters of very little concern in a great city; she had simply given up the rooms and sunk into the population somewhere. Lemuel bethought himself of the *bons esprits* who used to visit her, some of whom he remembered: perhaps they could tell him something of her. He started off on a search. At first he was not very well rewarded but at last he found one of

them at his club. This fellow was one of those innocuous scions of metropolitan society who have no more exacting occupation than gaping through club windows, and who are classed ethnologically as men because they wear trousers and do not seem to fit anywhere else on the Darwinian tree.

Did he remember Susie Mullin? Of course he did, and a natty little piece she had been too, but too fast with that gawking, what's his name. Had he seen her recently? Oh, my, no! she had dropped out of the society of Broadway, the wenches didn't last forever, yer know. Perhaps Lemuel would find her on Sixth Avenue, the ladies didn't drop with a plunk when they began to get stale; but if she wasn't there, why he'd be sure of turning her up sooner or later in the Bowery. Did chappie know where she had moved to? Yes, she had given him the address, he had never used it of course. It was down-town and she might not be there now.

Lemuel determined to make sure on this point. Without wasting many ceremonies on his virile informant he started off for the address given him which, it was apparent beforehand, without any exegesis on feminine declension, was much too suggestively close to South Fifth Avenue for patrician residence, even as patrician classification goes in the half world.

He found the house readily. It was altogether decent in appearance, in fact, it had the suggestion of being a little more decent than its surroundings; truly, little Susie had taken a social drop. He hoped for her sake and his purpose with her, that she had not yet fallen from this pause in her down road into that unrendering sink which lolls beneath all her sort, and whose murky rottenness mingles its

victims, beyond research or reclaim, into one gross, bawdy solution.

His hope was fulfilled. Susie was there, and what was more, she was alone, though it was already evening, and the enticements of the city were getting into full blast. She was glad to see him ; she did not say so very effusively, it was an awkward meeting for her, he understood that ; but despite all, he knew that his coming had cheered her. Beneath all the embarrassment and shame and reproaches, which she dared not confess and could not forget. away down in her fond little heart, which had not been soiled by the follies she had learned, he saw the woman's soul reaching up with great, hungry longing for love and recognition. Poor little Susie !

"I am fortunate in finding you home," said Lemuel, "but the evening is still young ; perhaps you were preparing to go out?"

"Oh, no," she replied, "I go out very little nowadays. Won't you sit down ? We'll have a sociable visit if you will, with nobody to disturb us."

"That's quite a novel experience for you, isn't it?" he asked, settling himself comfortably in the arm-chair she offered him. "You used to be a very much-beset hostess, if I remember, with no end of admirers making exactions on your time."

"Yes," she answered.

"Why have you changed your habits?" he persisted. He saw it embarrassed her to talk about herself, and he was determined to break down the restraint otherwise his errand to her had been of no worth.

"Can't you see?" she said, rather irritably. "I don't have to entertain here, and my friends wouldn't come if I asked them. I am just as happy without

them, though. I was happiest before I ever knew them, when I had Hugh alone. I didn't know it, perhaps, but I was. All my company was no good to me, and when Hugh began to like my having them, I hated them. Poor, good Hugh! he gave me too much, and it's no hardship for me to leave it, nothing matters to me so long as Hugh is kind."

"Humph!" ejaculated Lemuel, blowing a huge cloud of smoke into the crevices of all the little window-panes—he had crossed the room and stood gazing down into the uninteresting blackness of the street.

"You don't like Hugh, I know," said Susie, "But you musn't say anything against him here, this is his house, I am—his wife. It would be disloyal, Lemuel, you won't, will you?"

"You are his what?" cried Lemuel, wheeling about and looking her squarely in the face. Her eyes dropped, she was silent. "His wife? say his—never mind what, but don't call it wife, the word's too honest."

"Don't call me that, Lemuel," she cried, raising her burning face and clutching his hand in both of hers. "Don't, please don't, I'm not—not what you think."

"Not what I think? Ho-ho! will you tell me then that since you were in your 'teens and Hugh between cruises used to steal visits into the Court, your honor hasn't been as cheap as the asking?"

"Only to him, Lemuel; I have been chaste to all the world but him, and I loved him so. When he comes back from the sea—it's only a little, a very little while to wait now—he will marry me as he has promised a thousand times and I shall be a woman again. Then you will not dare defame me."

"Oh, yes, when he comes back from sea he's going

to marry—but not you. He has his lady picked—but she's not a dark and gypsy maid, oh no—and her name is not Susie—and she's not a poor dishonored Magdalen, oh not at all! She is as pure as the great blue heaven above, and to-night, I doubt, standing his watch on some tropic parallel, that villain is counting up her charms and her fortune and wondering when he shall plunder her of them. But by the just God, he shall never do it, I swear he never shall!"

"It's false!" she cried, springing up and turning fiercely upon him. "Of course it's false," she continued with a hoarse, frightened laugh, "How should you know? How dare you accuse him to me, who know him better than anyone in all the world?" She was trembling in every limb, her face had turned to a terrible whiteness that was more marked by her raven hair that waved coquettishly about it. He neither moved or spoke, he only looked down into her accusing face sorrowfully, pityingly. What good friends they had been—long ago! "Tell me, Lemuel, how you know it," she said more softly.

"What's the use if it's false?"

"Oh, but tell me," she pleaded, laying one hand gently on his breast, "You came to tell me. Don't be angry, dear Lemuel; I'm weak and wretched, I meant no wrong, do tell me."

"But you'll not believe me against your lover, Susie."

"No, I'll believe no wrong of him, but I don't want you to believe any wrong of him either. You've been deceived by something, Lemuel. Tell me and I'll explain it all away."

"But supposing you can't explain it away?" he said, "supposing it is true, what then?"

“True that he has been false to me?”

“Yes.”

“Then shall he die and I will die with him. He shall never be married to another than me. I have paid him the last price of love, I am his betrothed, and in life or in death I will be his bride. By the God against whom I have sinned, I swear his life were not a penny-worth if he has been false to me! But it is not true. Come, tell me this strange thing.”

He seated himself, and drawing her down beside him told her the story that should, he believed, by opposite motives, bind their conspiracy.

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## CHAPTER XX.

### SUSIE LEARNS THE PLOT.

On the street, on the street,  
To and fro with weary feet;  
Aching heart and aching head;  
Homeless, lacking daily bread;  
Lost to friends and joy and name,  
Sold to sorrow, sin and shame;  
Ruined, wretched, lone, forlorn;  
Weak and wan, with weary feet,  
Still I wander on the street!

On the street, on the street  
Midnight finds my straying feet;  
Hark, the sound of pealing bells!  
Oh, the tales their music tells!

Happy hours forever gone;  
 Happy childhood, peaceful home—  
 Then a mother on me smiled,  
 Then a father owned his child—  
 Vanish, mocking vision sweet!  
 Still I wander on the street.

On the street, on the street,  
 Whither tend my wandering feet?  
 Love and hope and joy are dead—  
 Not a place to lay my head;  
 Every door against me sealed—  
 Hospital and Potter's Field,  
 These stand open!—wider yet  
 Swings perdition's yawning gate,  
 Thither tend my wandering feet,  
 On the street, on the street.

On the street, on the street,  
 Might I *here* a Saviour meet!  
 From the blessed far-off years  
 Comes the story of *her* tears  
 Whose sad heart with sorrow broke  
 Heard the words of love He spoke,  
 Heard Him bid her anguish cease,  
 Heard Him whisper, "Go in peace!"  
 Oh, that I might kiss His feet  
 On the street, on the street!

— *Verses found on an unfortunate woman  
 who died in a cellar-barroom near the  
 Five Points, New York.*

WHERE the colonial boys and girls of New York used to skate in winter with merry frolic, where sweetheart and lover once floated and told their silly vaporings beneath the lurement of the summer moon, there, like a great, gray, slimy monster which has risen pestilentially from the mire of those better days, crouches the Tombs. It is like a snake, for it squats upon its belly and its tail stretches back into

the reeking blackness of Leonard Street ; it is like a mighty saurian, for its jaws are wide and yawping ; again it is like the great ugly monoliths that crouched in the temples of the Pharaohs, for it is sullen and hideous and has votaries and a priesthood and sacrifice. Its thick pillars protrude like snarling tusks, its long slippery steps are like rows of teeth, and its dark, cavernous porch is like a gaping mouth ever open gluttonously for the grist of the city which feeds and feeds but never fills its black, churning bowels within.

When at night the fitful lamps of Centre Street flicker wanly upon its face, when the wind that is ever blowing up from the City Hall croons dolefully around its low tusk-like columns, and the little narrow windows are lighted up under the sombre porch, then indeed it seems to blink weirdly over the haunts of the malefactors who have been devoted to its indiscriminate digestion, and stretching its jaws toward that teeming flotsam of population who huddle beneath its malign tutelage, it smacks them in remembrance of the morsels of the good old days ; and its dumb, gray walls, requickening at the memory, repeat again the musical call which once mocked their echoes and has long since died within their solemn depths, " Why-oh, why-oh ! " For crime has its ritual and hierarchy as well as virtue ; and the heroics of the Tombs and the records of the devoted who have been sacrificed to its unrendering gluttony have become folk-lore and nursery tales thereabouts for the preception of the spawning children.

So the Tombs smiles grimly as it watches the harvest ripening for its grinding. But it is sad withal, for it knows that the days of its glory are gone forever.



There was a time, not so many years ago either, when the snarl of streets, built upon the haphazard lines of old lanes and cow-paths, which by devious indirection found their vortex in the Five Points, were a local expression for all that was superlative in squalor and iniquity. They had passed from whatever meagre respectability they ever owned and had become as veritable if not as romantic a stamping ground for all manner of outlawry as were Hounslow Heath or Exmoor Downs. The reputable citizens who, with a morbid propensity for exploring vice, intruded at rare intervals into these intricate alleys, generally yielded up their substance as graciously to the denizens of their encounter, as their prototypes may be supposed to have done in the good old days of the border wars. The gangs which under the imbecile measures for their suppression flourished in the tortuous places like the traditional bay tree, because certain Sixth Warders with legislative aspirations found their mode of persuasion convenient for practical politics, had all the qualities of fraternity with Robin Hood and his merry men of the Greenwood, though owing no doubt to the imperfect perspective of their achievements they have not as yet been decorated with the nimbus of romance which has been accorded to that reprobate hero. For time like distance is a great mollifier of deformities, and we may expect that some day our execrated aldermen will become as picturesquely revisionary as Arthur and his round table.

But at last the Points grew too pestiferous for its own survival. The Church, waking up to the fact of its own militancy, started on a crusade for its replevin to decency and good order. Then the city, incited by the public scandal of this festering sore upon the

body politic, came in and regraded and rechristened some of the streets whose names had become a particular stench in the nostrils of the respectable electors. The cellar tenements were abolished, the more noxious and debauching facts eradicated, and the Points was launched on a new era.

But the original rottenness remained. The whiskey that passed over the bars was just as vile, the women were scarcely less bawdy, the men scarcely less tough, and above all there was the same tortuous maze of streets for sally and retreat, which were such a seduction to the highwayman's craft, a means of livelihood which stood in higher repute by the traditions of the Points than honest labor.

A fortnight has passed since we saw Lemuel trying to negotiate a confederacy with little Susie. It is night in New York; not that long, periodic night that fills the absence of the sun, and is measured alike in town and field, but the fretful, half-restoring night between bed-going and up-rising which is the city's only resting time. The theatres have all been darkened; the joke of the buffoon, the songs of the soubrette, the tantalizing contortions of the chorus dancer have vanished like the dead, like lights that have flashed and failed. The saloons and cafés are grinding the grist of a few late bibbers; the car bells tinkle with strange gutturalness on the night air where their music is uncontested save by the clatter of an occasional cabby skating his poor jade over the pavement at the impress of a besotted fare.

Over in the vicinity of the Bowery there is still a glimmer of brightness, like a galaxy in the firmament of the city. But then, people never go to bed in the Bowery, for they do such things and they say such things, as the song has it, in that broad and bawdy.

thoroughfare, such bewitchingly wild and wicked things, that one never has time to sleep.

The clock up in the dark, stone tower of old Trinity strikes one, and a hundred lesser clocks from a hundred humbler steeples answer—one. Do the chimes of Trinity ring away to the Bowery? Does the evangel of that aristocratic down-town temple, passing up Broadway with benison to the up-town mansions and the acres of parish leasehold, perchance sometimes turn aside through Park Row into the bedlam whose pantheon is the Tombs? May be. But if it does it must be only a still, small voice in all the polyglot mumble, for the East Side does not schedule itself by church clocks. It is probably then no more than chance that just as the clock of Trinity strikes one, a man who came from somewhere out of the garish Bowery light, turns from the murky shadows of Chatham Street (it was Chatham Street then) into the murkier gloom of Baxter. He is walking briskly, like one who has an errand and knows perfectly his way. Yet he should be a stranger for he has none of the slouching bravado which marks the gait of the denizen hoodlum and is half his stock in trade. What is tempting him to sally so boldly into the precincts of crime at this hour of night? Does he trust in his great strength and frowning face? Truly they are worthy of respect but they might not serve him in the pest of this place. Perhaps he is a plenipotentiary from some co-potential sovereignty of Why-oh Land, come to hobnob with Apple Mag or try diplomatic conclusions with the great King Danny. Perhaps—*descensus ad pudorem!* he is the agent of some profitable fence, who comes panoplied with the password of the gang and wadded with the long green of commissions earned. At any rate it is to

be hoped he is in alliance with the autonomy of the Sixth Ward ; for Beezy Garrity is still ascendent to the regency of the heart of Driscoll, and her liege-consort has not yet become contraband to the police and taken hangman's tea, in the most exclusive cloister of the Tombs, leaving his satrapy to be ingloriously merged in the prosaic economy of the city.

But whatever may be his business in striding so fearlessly into Baxter Street at the witching hour of one, and whatever may be his privity with Sixth Ward powers, it is certain the stranger has not come on affairs of State to-night, for he stops short of the Royal Palace and enters the hallway of a dingy tenement. Adjacent to the door he enters is a low groggery of the sort known in the slang of the day as a pot-house. Did he notice it as he passed? Very likely not ; groggeries in that neighborhood do not make themselves too conspicuous, particularly after the hour of one. But there was someone crouching in a dark corner of its window who noticed him. For two hours she had been waiting there. She had ordered liquor from the bar several times, most of which she had spilled upon the floor or left to be carried away untasted ; her throat was not yet toughened to such fiery stuff. The blear-eyed men as they rolled in and out had leered at her and sometimes spoke to her, the wretched old hags who were drafted in to make up the sociability of the place stared at her curiously or hurled their coarse jests at her, the demonish fiddler, seated down by the further end of the bar, had rasped his execrable invitation to dance in her ears over and over again ; but she had paid no attention to any of them. One maudlin longshoreman, who from a table

across the room had worked himself into an amorous fever over her dainty charms which were quite unnatural to that den, determined to add his persuasion to that of the rapturous music, with which purpose reeling toward her he did his best to explain that he had come to take partners. Being received with scant courtesy he endeavored, according to the etiquette of the place, to impress his esquireship upon her. At this point however the barkeeper, either for prudential reasons or from a crude sense of chivalry not altogether inconsistent with Baxter Street, cudgelled the fellow over the head with a bottle and retired him from further festivities, thereby serving notice on the other customers not to be too free in their attentions to this particular young lady. "Never ye mind them, Kitty," said the barkeeper, rolling the débris of the burly longshoreman into a corner, "they're a tough lot and I'm no beauty show myself, but I'm waitin' to lift the first mug what meddles wi' yer."

This woman saw the stranger who came striding into Baxter Street at the uncanny hour of one. As he turned into the hallway she slunk out of the dive and followed him. The darkness of the hall was as gross as that darkness visible which Milton puts in hell; beside it the gloomy street without had been a blaze of glory, but she knew her way. She heard the stairs above her creaking with the tread of her quarry, for they were crazy, rickety stairs; but they were kindly dumb for her to mount—why should they complain to bear her dainty weight when they had borne so much greater just before? Silently she crept up behind him. At the fourth floor he stopped and rapped on a door which opened from the landing.

"Come in," answered an old, cracked voice within. The invitation was a poor formality, for the door had offered no resistance to his heavy knock, and he was half in already. "Oh, Mr. Giles," exclaimed the same harsh voice, "An' it's yourself that's come to see me! It's a bit late I've been sitting up for you, but I never thought you'd come, no I didn't. Sit down, if you can find a place in a poor old woman's home."

"Now, Nancy," he snapped impatiently, "shut up your confounded lying and attend to business. You knew I was coming, and what I've come for, and I know what kind of an old fool you are without your telling me, so we'll dispense with ceremonies. My time is too much account to spend it spooning with a rusty hag like you at this hour of night."

"Ah, I knew it, I knew it," moaned the old dame. "You've come to jeer me. But there was a time when you would have said different things from that, yes there was; I was young once, and have slept on as soft a bed as another; I've had lovers' arms around my neck and lovers' kisses on my lips; I've borrowed lovers that belonged to other heifers—the knaves! the law had yoked them to plow-cattle—and sent them home again with no one the wiser. Oh, I've heard secrets and been with the gentry in my day, ask them if I haven't; they're not all in hell yet; there's more than one foresworn whitebeard lying uptown beside his wife to-night, who's told me hotter words than he ever told her, yes, there is."

"Well, Nancy," said Hugh, after he had picked out the most substantial-looking chair he could find, and seated himself conveniently close to the stove, which was making a feeble attempt to warm the

draughty room, "if you've done with your memoirs, which are very interesting, but have nothing to do with the case, we'll get on to something else."

When Hugh had entered, he had slammed the door behind him, but it fitted so crazily with the jam that it was not an effective screen to anyone who might be watching outside. As soon, therefore, as the door was closed, the woman who had followed him from the saloon, crept in front of it and put herself in audience and witness of all that passed within.

"Now, as to this Maurice Windham," continued Hugh, "he's one of the whitebeards, I suppose?"

"Aye, that he is, the devil take him!"

"That's the way to bless him, and if you serve with me, the devil's like to have him before sailing day. Gad, Nancy, you and I're a team, and when we pull together we're bound to start something. If I hadn't smelled you out I might have lost the pot. The old scarecrow Windham keeps up at Doom House might have helped me out if Windham didn't have her fixed, though I'm damned if I think she loves him much either. Never mind, I'll twirl her neck in the general festivities, if I get time. Now, let's go over the thing. You were at Windham House the time of the affair with Agnes Vail?"

"Yes, you see I knew a bit about midwifery—as why wouldn't I?—and what's more, I knew how to keep a secret, which all women don't. Maurice came to me and said—we were old pals, you know—how the lady was near her term, and how she was not of common sort, and he wanted to do all he could for her, only he must keep the business whist. I doubt he thought a good bit o' the wench and meant to do the square thing by her, old boar that

he was, if he hadn't drunk himself into an ugly fool."

"She was worth taking a bit of trouble for, wasn't she?"

"She was a beautiful lady, but rum and riches were against her, and with that blackguard they counted more than she did."

"Right again, Nancy; Windham would sell his soul for a shilling."

"An' what the devil don't own on't would be dear at that," exclaimed the hag. "She was a nice lady, was Miss Agnes, and the child, my! it was as big and chubby and pretty as you never saw. But she up and off with it when no one was watching—oh, it was a pity, and both of them so fair to live! I'm an old grizzled thing myself that's been spared all these years to be no good to anybody, an' I say, it was a pity. But maybe it wasn't; the older the bones the harder the bed; Miss Agnes lay down to sleep when her flesh was soft, and the little one, it went to a better life, for I guess it never lived long enough to know anything about this."

"Never mind that, stick to what you know something about; and you'd better belay your gospel rigging or I'll think you're nearer joining church than me."

"Ah, never you mind about me. If Nancy Green was a maid again, the snow shouldn't be purer, but she's too old a sinner and owes too many wrongs to start singing hymns now. So fetch on your work, one must live you know, and if the job's none too honest, neither am I and I'll not shy at it."

"Good; you'll lie on feathers and eat salads yet. But the job's honest, honest as hanging. Windham has a daughter."



“ Ha, I know, I know,” cackled the hag, wagging her old head solemnly.

“ Such a pearl and gem of womanhood as is not in all the world beside; pure and innocent she is as the babe unborn; and he has brought her up in infamy, he has caged her in an infernal hole and set a watchdog over her, he has made her a stench and a polluted thing before the world and burdened her with his own sin, that her sensitive soul might never break out of its vile bondage and learn how he has defamed her. He thought no one would ever know, but I know; he thought she would never dare confront him, but I will confront him with every crime that burdens his black soul and demand their recompense. Windham is rich, his wife is richer—bah! what does it signify? Irene is more than any portion; I love her, and I’ll marry her because I love her. To hell with the money! it has been curse enough already. And yet it’s hers; I’ll get it for her, I’ll set her free and restore her to her birthright; and if in the administration of the effects I should find that I’m an heir too, why I’ll take my inheritance, that’s all. But first I must marry her, I can do nothing without her. She little loves me—still I’ll marry her. I think she regards her nefarious father after a sort, I’ll use him to coax her; and if that’s not enough, why Nancy, there are other ways of suasion with the heifers, you understand what you are for. Remember, as gentle as possible, but the work must be done. I haven’t always pulled a stroke with the law, but I’m going to this time. Ah, it’s a pretty song we’ll sing them when the curtain rises, hey Nance? the rehearsal isn’t half bad, by the gods! how is it the overture runs—Twenty odd years ago Windham had a funeral and buried

something ; never mind what, it's too late to dig it up now and proxies were cheap that would lie as comfortably in his family lot as in Potter's Field. When his wife began to come around instead of carrying on the account at the undertaker's as he figured, he spun her a yarn and the poor old lady has been making her eyes red all these years over a little grave that covered none of hers.

There's never a doubt of what I tell you, Nancy. What if we have no direct proof, we don't need it, we can't be wrong, our case is convicting ; I'll play my game on it and I'll win. We know that at the time of Windham's trouble with Agnes he was negotiating his marriage, and within eighteen months from that time he had a lawful child. So much is not guess work. Now what ? The child died. How do we know it ? His word for it ! a nasty cheap assurance. A tombstone and a town entry ! a little higher-priced, but still within reasonable means. What more ? How about Irene ? She is the orphaned child of a dear friend ; under the rose, a bit of kindred ! Indeed ! Agnes was dark, methinks ; do children then no longer resemble parents ? Windham says he was not at Windham House the time of the unfortunate matter. He lies. He says Agnes strayed away in delirium and could not be found ; that the child was taken away and brought up under his charge ; that Irene is that child. He lies most damnably ; you know he lies, I know he lies. He knows no more than anyone else what became of that child ; and though he may have fooled all the rest of the world with his story, you know and I know and he knows that it was not and is not and cannot be Irene. I tell you I have scrutinized the corners of this fellow's life pretty carefully and

I'll vouch for what I have said. If he balks when my business comes on I'll throw it at him and see if he can deny it. I'll spin the old man my little yarn just to see if he remembers, I'll hurl at him the name of Agnes—poor Agnes, whose purified angel in heaven shall not much longer curse him—and then, oh Nancy," Hugh rubbed his hands with satisfaction, a very unusual demonstration for him. "Do you see the point, Nancy?" he said.

"An' if I do, it's no thanks to your telling of it. What's it the lawyers say, 'There's no heir to the living?' Oh, I've lain with the cloth in my time."

"Now, damn you for an old harpie, can't you think of anything but that? Windham will be fixed all right when the time comes, I tell you. No one hates him more than I."

"But can I be there?" cried the woman, "can I clutch my fingers into his neck—so? can I hear the rattle in his throat and see his eyes bulging out and his face grow black and shout into his ear, 'Dear Maurice, dear husband, don't you know me? It's Nancy, your long-lost Nancy.' For he was my first lover, you know, he taught me to live by prey, and so I'll come to his funeral. It's a dozen years since money of his crossed my palm, but I'll have my dower and be squared."

"Hold that chatter," shouted Hugh, "or you'll never have anything; if all his widows were to come in for thirds I reckon we'd have to get a new kind of arithmetic. You leave the old man to me, he's part of the game and belongs on the board until he's done his work; when things get on where I can't play him any more, I'll dispose of him with neatness and despatch; you needn't fear my leaving him to grace. All you've got to do is to look out

for the girl if she should need a bridesmaid, and you see that you bring her through in shape, or, by Gad ! you're a Milo's Venus now side of the thing I'll make you look like !”

Hugh got up and kicked his chair into a corner. “What a heathen hole this is, Nancy,” he exclaimed, looking around, “one has to come at an infernal hour who has secrets to talk here. It looks like a sieve too.”

“Never you worry there,” answered Nancy, “it's no gay place for a wedding, but it's safe ; once get your bird in and she'll not go out till the door's opened.”

“You'd better see she don't. We understand each other. Good-night.”

As he opened the door the figure that had been crouching by it slunk back into a dark corner. The door closed behind him and all was black as before. His footsteps echoed sepulchrally in the passage—one flight, two flights, three flights ; then three or four quick steps in the lower hall and all was quiet. A moment later the spy crept noiselessly down behind him, cast one quick glance up and down the street, and hurried away into the concealing darkness of the city.

The night air was not cold, and yet it made her shiver, she was so weak and nervous. “Oh, it would have been so easy,” she muttered, in the blackness of the hall, when her foresworn lover had almost brushed her clothes, so close ~~they~~ had been, when the confession of his perfidy to her was still warm on his lips ; it would have been so easy to have balked forever that other love which was stealing him from her. But she was glad she had not done it. The horoscope of fate that was gathering over

him was assured even to her doubting astrology. Her lover should not, could not cheat her, and she was doing a worthy service to top her misshapen life. Haste then to him who sent her, for she had news that would not wait.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE SON OF AGNES VAIL AVENGES HER DEATH.

*Oli.* Alas, poor fool, how have they baffled thee !

*Clo.* Why, "Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them." I was one, sir, in this interlude ; one Sir Topas, sir ; but that's all one. "By the Lord, fool, I am not mad." But do you remember ? "Madam, why laugh you at such a barren rascal ? and you smile not, he's gagged." And thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges.

*Mal.* I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you.

*Oli.* He hath been most notoriously abused.

—*Twelfth Night.*

MEALS were not formal functions in Windham House ; by no means : there were only Irene and Barbette to sit down to table and they were anything but convivial company. Barbette was a little French-provincial woman, whose character was not inaptly expressed by her name. How old she was no one could have told by her appearance ; probably no one, unless possibly herself, either knew or cared. It was certain that, in the dozen years or more

she had been at Windham House, she had not grown any more wizened or dry or sour or scrawny than she had been when she came. She was as emphatically a temporal equation as a Pharoah mummy, which indeed she not a little resembled. Some said she did not get any dryer or sourer because she was as dry and sour already as she could be. Other babblers said she was an anachronism or a freak of some kind, because there was no natural law of adhesion that would keep such a very dry person from crumbling apart ; and therefore she must have been magically embalmed by the graveyard odor of Windham House. It made little difference anyway, whether she was honestly alive on the inside, or whether she was an hypnotic expression, or just a mummy, cut, dried, and confined, who had an effective prejudice against a Necropolitan retirement ; she was not vivacious company under any name. She had been Irene's nurse, and latterly her conservator, tutor, companion, and factotum. She had a quick intelligence and by no means contemptible education ; she knew the facts and foibles that had passed current as accomplishments in the world before her retirement from it, and she had at least taken honest pains with her ward. As she was never affectionate, so she was never violent ; her temper was much too frigid and controlled to be agitated by any passion good or bad. She and Irene were polar to each other by nature and no amount of familiarity could ever bring them into sympathy. Irene did not hate Barbette, it would have been hard for her to hate anyone ; but her heart revolted instinctively from this only companion and made her almost as lonesome as if she were the sole tenant of Windham House. She often morbidly wondered, during the

solitary hours that offered her no distractions, what was the history of her life back before she could remember how she had been brought to Windham House. She might as well ask the Sphinx as ask Barbette. Barbette knew her business and kept it. All Irene knew was the story that had been gratuitously trumpeted through the Court years ago. Perhaps it was as well not to know anything more, there was condemnation enough in what she knew already.

Was it the crisp October days, or what was it that had so invigorated Irene's appetite lately? She had not used to be much of a gourmand. Barbette noticed the change. "Are you afraid I'll eat you out of house and home?" said Irene gayly, one afternoon, as she saw Barbette, who had satisfied her own meagre wants watching her across the table, her expressionless, hard, old face meaning nothing, and yet capable of concealing a hundred meanings. "What is it, Barbette? must one always then be glum?"

"Il ne me plais pas de te voir aussi joyeuse, René," said Barbette. "On sait bien que seulement les bêtes son joyeuses dans ce monde."

Irene glanced across the table, with surprise. The words were kinder than usual, despite their apparent churlishness. Only when Barbette was in her best humor did she ever address her in French.

"Why are you sorry?" asked Irene.

"Oh, it's no matter," answered Barbette, with a relapse into her customary diffidence, "there's a time to mourn and a time to dance, and sometimes they follow close; you've had a dull time enough here with me, heaven knows, and I don't begrudge you merrier company."

“What is it?” exclaimed Irene. “You know something; tell me!”

“I know nothing, child, I am only dreaming, and dreams do not always come to pass. There, there, run away now, and if dreams fall true, as no one knows if they may, perhaps you won’t forget all the ugly old Barbette has taught you.”

In that moment a strange emotion possessed Irene; whence it came she could not tell; it was a most unnatural thing, if she could have stopped to think she would never have yielded to it. Impulsively she stooped over and kissed the grim old face. She had never done such a thing before, Barbette had never spoken to her just the same before. Her own audacity terrified her, almost she expected a cataclysm to take place. But nothing awful happened and she stole away to her musing place out among the dark, confidential trees.

The harbor looked dark and deep and mysterious; the sombre hills of Groton grimaced frowningly at her across it, and the waves tumbled discordantly on the shore. The evening seemed to have an untoward augury. She strained her eyes seaward. Out in that murky stretch of waters some one was sailing to her. She could not see him, the weather was too thick, the night was too near, he was still too far away; but she knew he was coming, Barbette had meant to tell her of him, and the breeze was fresh and favoring. Did Barbette think this had made her gay? Poor, simple Barbette! she had been gay in spite of this. She had been thinking of another home-coming, of a wanderer who had come to her less than a season ago, speaking strange words. But he had not meant them, he must not mean them. He had pleaded to help her—then; if she



had gone to him she would be safe now, careless of the evil that was making against her. Great, generous fellow! he had wanted to forget the past, why had she forbidden him? Would he never come again? Would she send him away if he came? "Lemuel!" As if conjured by the little cry, his vision came and stood before her, just as he himself had stood in that other time, telling her those burning words of love over again. She was reaching out her hands toward him, on her tongue was the fatal word, "Come!" And then she remembered all her miserable life and the stain that could not be blotted out, which was true, forever damningly true. Could she, a hateful thing, go to him, so good and noble? In this hour of foreboding should she love him less bravely? "Oh, no, no!" she shrieked, clasping her hands to her temples.

But it was only a dream. The boughs of the half-naked trees were rasping together as dolefully as ever, the water was plashing at her feet just as it had used to splash, sadly, lonesomely; he had not come and would not; Barbette was right, only fools were happy.

Night was falling. She saw a vessel making the harbor. Her bulwarks were low, her beam full, and she stood stiffly up. The wind was on her quarter, and she came on under course sails.

The wind's in her shoulder, she's running in free,  
She's no slouch of a sailor, this waif of the sea;  
She luffs to her riding, she swings out her light—  
The "Mollie Marie" has come home to-night.

Yes, it was a time of home-comings, but not for Irene.

Like a great, graceful bird the "Mollie Marie"

rounded to the wind, her foresails slid noiselessly down by the stays, her anchor plunged from the cat-head, and the black barkentine rode as gravely on the mumbling Thames as on a night long ago when Lemuel, hardly out of short-clothes, had watched her dark silhouette from a spile of Goggin's wharf.

She no sooner rode to her cable than her yawl was lowered and made for Windham Close. As it touched the shore two men stepped out. Both were of powerful frame, both walked with the swagger of men long accustomed to the sea. One was much older than the other, he could hardly be under fifty. He was a little above medium height. He had a round bullet-head with a simian jaw, and a thick neck set on two ponderous shoulders. His face was red as the torrid sun, his eyes were small and deep, and he was smooth shaven.

The other was perhaps thirty years old by his appearance. His complexion was swarthy rather than florid, his hair and beard were as black as night. His face was at once both sinister and handsome. He was taller than the older man by a head, and his proportions were less bull-like, though hardly less powerful and menacing.

They walked quickly up to Doom House. Irene met them on the porch. "Good evening and welcome, uncle," she said. The name was a courtesy she had always kept. She felt that he was her only friend in the whole world and her love to him had a forlorn tenaciousness. However much he had injured her by begetting her into the world he at least had not played the coward to his sin by putting her out of it. He had given her an ample support in the narrow life that was possible to her, and there was something in the very thought of his fatherhood,

even though it were a dishonest parentage, which bound her filially to him.

"Ah-ha, little lady-bird," said Maurice, looking at her with unconcealed satisfaction, "and how have you been this long time, eh?" He pressed her face between his great, rough hands till he made her lips pucker prettily out. "Ha, ha, we know a thing or two, don't we?" he said as he laughingly kissed them, "we're old hands with the ladies, pretty old hands." Irene wondered if he would have kissed her if she had been ugly like Barbette, she wondered if he really loved her a little. She would not have dared to kiss him first, but she was glad he had kissed her, the token gave more assurance to the forlorn, half-doubting love she bore him. He was almost a stranger to her, only at rare seasons had he visited Windham House, not more than three or four times a year and then she had not always seen him, for he always came at night and never stayed long; but in the absence of every other affection the slender bond that united her to him grew strong.

"Good-evening, Miss Irene," said Hugh, advancing, "I have to urge my own welcome, it seems."

"Good-evening," she answered, giving him her hand coldly. Tall as she was he seemed to loom before her like a tawny giant who could crush her in his grasp. And yet she was not the weaker, but he. There is a philter which our good mother Eve, having proven in Eden on her too guileless spouse, has passed down to her kind to match them against the men despite their comparative flabbiness of muscle; and so well have the dames used their hereditament that they have even outdone their bewitching granddam in the mastery they have obtained.

Hugh looked down into Irene's deep, strange eyes

that gave him no response, he saw the amorous playing of her hair over her temples, her every perfection tormented him with feverish impatience ; like Tantalus he saw the cup of wild desire just beyond his reach. But it should not always balk him so, let what powers would defy him. By right or by guile, by love or by force he would satisfy this madness that was upon him. Teasing baubles of a woman's craft, the laugh of an eye, the dimple of a smile, the drowsy touch of soft, embracing arms—what ephemeral, trifling things they are to work so intemperate mischief ! They spell us from dull care away and rock us in oblivion. For them the Nazarite Samson was shorn of his strength and ground in the mills of the Philistines. For them the triumvir Antony threw away empire and Roman applause. For them ten thousand thousand strong men since the world began have made themselves fools and weaklings.

The guest table was spread at Windham House, by which token it was a rare occasion. Barbette and Irene, not having been instructed in the virtues of dinner *à la carte*, and feeling no temptation to put on ceremony for the sake of one another, generally were contented to eat at a small table in the kitchen, except on pleasant days in summer when, at Irene's desire, they sometimes set the table on the porch just outside, where it seemed a little more sociable, if only for the chickens that came clucking around to share the meal. The dining-hall with its heavy furnishings was so gloomy and resounded so solemnly to their unfamiliar voices, that Irene never could find any appetite to eat there.

To-night however the big, dingy mahogany board, that had been one of the furbishments of Windham

House since time immemorial, was laid with its State ware, which was as old and murky and stupidly grand as itself. Dismal enough the great table looked set for three, dismal enough it was beside the festivity it used to boast in the days when Chesterfieldian old Peter Windham had faultlessly presided at its head and all his gay chivalry and gayer ladies had reached down its length on either hand in revelrous alignment. Then wine had flowed from beaker and bowl, then song had waked the echoes of the night, and propitious Venus, tutelary of the feast, had nodded. But that was in the good old days when men's blood was fierce, and women had warm hearts, and the world had not gone after the wooden gods that give it oracles against nature. Old Peter's days were over now as truly as old Peter himself was an undivided fraction of mother earth, and the melancholy relics of Windham House alone remained for dumb mementos of his extinguished glory. The great table, spread in miserable effigy of its better days, seemed, on this latter night like a funereal monitor of its deceased master of ceremonies. "Remember Peter Windham," it seemed to repeat in its poor, mute speech, "remember old Peter and his jolly company!" and the great, blank walls, unawakened through all the silent years, answering the monition, echoed again with the guttural chorus of "Rollo the Rover," which old Peter used to bellow down the long board o' nights when the wine was in his head and the chivalry were under the table and the ladies, having been kissed by fervid love, had relapsed to a Lethe which defied even the cachinnation of old Peter's stalwart lungs :

He ranged every land and he roamed every sea,  
 He could lick any man in the Royal navee ;  
 Maids he had unmade, the dears, by the score,  
 And corvettes he'd taken, a dozen or more ;  
 He lived mighty long and he lived mighty well,  
 But his bones are with Davy, his soul is in hell——  
 For he died long ago, long ago.

But the guests at Windham House to-night were much too grim themselves to be disturbed by any silly necromancy like that. Such stuff would do for Irene who was an emotional creature and lived in an unhappy communion with the past ; but they had no ominous associations, their stomachs had that convenient toughness that would have allowed them to eat as comfortably on a grave-stone as on an honest table ; and as to their mourning for the atavian Pete, why the deader he was, the better.

"Where is Mistress Irene ?" asked Maurice, seating himself heavily at table.

"She had a headache, sir, and sent her excuses," answered Barbette.

"Then why the devil didn't you say so without being asked?"

"Because I've been taught not to be officious," was the answer.

Maurice pulled up to the table with a discontented grunt and attacked the food. "Here man," he said, passing over a dusty bottle, "this stuff wasn't half bad last time I sampled it. Drink and be merry ; and if you can't be merry, dammit, be as merry as you can."

"Will you turn out that infernal magpie?" said Hugh, motioning toward Barbette, who stood near the door and who had been watching him with her venomous eyes ever since he had entered. "Turn her

out, I say, or she'll turn the food!" Barbette shot at him a look of malign blackness, her eyes snapped, her thin lips quivered, there was something devilish and reptile-like in the hatred she showed which made the strong man, insolent as he was, feel uncomfortable.

"Clear out!" thundered Maurice, without so much as looking round, and Barbette vanished as suddenly as if she had been spirited away by the black art.

"That hag 'll never be any good till she's dead," said Hugh.

"Ha-ha," retorted Maurice, "I think she loves you no better. But she's all right in her place. I can manage her. I've never seen the woman I couldn't manage."

"Then manage your daughter."

"My niece, you mean."

"With your pardon, I don't mean," snorted Hugh, "we'll call a spade a spade, and we'll call her your daughter, you understand what I am here for, and time don't wait."

"Begging your pardon this time," replied Maurice, with a drawling sneer, "I understand what you are not here for; you are not here to give cards and spades to me or my daughter, as you choose to call her. You've known me a bit in the past, and ye'll understand what I mean when I say, 'Luff a leetle, ye're sailing too free for nasty weather.' If my daughter wants you, she can have you, and if she don't, as by Gad, I think she don't, why, I say, she has mighty good taste, and I'm not the man to make her have you. I've done her wrong enough in the past, and I'm damned if I'll sell her to a scoundrel now."

Hugh Giles laughed into his mug of ale with a great guffaw. "Ha-ha!" he roared, slamming his empty mug down on the table in a way that would

have done credit to the defunct Sir Peter, "you've injured her? Ho-ho! now that is excellent meek! Don't be too hard on yourself! You've wronged her? Pooh-pooh!"

"That's what I said, you rattling fool! But I've done her what amends I could, which is more than every knave would do."

"Now, that is good!" exclaimed Hugh, "you've done her amends? You've given her a dog's support in this kennel, and told her a lie to make her the scapegoat of your blackguardism, that's the amends you've done her."

"Do you mean to say," cried Maurice, in a fury, "that the girl is anything but ——"

"Hold! Be careful what you call her."

"——but what I have confessed her?"

"I do."

"Then," shrieked Maurice, black with rage, "by Heaven! you lie in your throat!"

Hugh drew his long legs carelessly from under the table, and rising, began to pace the room. "I lie?" he sneered, "in my throat? oh, yes, in my throat, no doubt; such damnable, wicked lies that a witty man would be fool enough to believe them. Listen!" he cried, turning upon his superior and hissing the words into his very face. "You sneaking rat, who dare call honest men liars, listen! The child of Agnes Vail—was a boy!"

The florid face of Maurice Windham turned ashen white.

"Mutiny!" he cried, springing up.

Hugh laughed a great, roaring laugh that made the walls of the gruesome chamber ring, laughed into the face of his master as no man ever dared laugh before.



“Ho-ho!” he shouted, “a joke, a quarter-deck joke, by the gods! Mutiny? Do you think, then, you’re off soundings, fool? Feel the good old earth that’s under you, how firm it is! Mutiny be hanged! You’ve no ship here, you’re not master and I’m not mate, we’re just two lubbers, sir, two gentlemen met for business. And for that the business drags, I’ll tell a story to beguile you. It will please your fancy, I’ll be sworn. Listen! Thirty years ago last New Year’s night, that black ship riding yonder brought to this house a curious company. You, sir, were one in that company; a fair young girl whose only stain was that she had loved you too well, was another; and there was a third, one—but I’ll not vex you with her name, she’s such a sorry hag you’ve forgot her these dozen years. Now was a strange thing. For whereas there came only three, yet here they were four; and whereas they were four, yet there sailed away but two, and none remained. None, did I say? Your pardon, good my master! there was a corpse, a poor maimed corpse—but, bah! ’tis nothing, a clod, why count it? She had been your mistress, sir. In the chamber which is above us now you broke her heart, you turned her great love into greater hate; when she was weak and sick and most, most wretched, you drove her out into the black night—to die; her and the child you had given her. Did she fear to die? Was life anything to her? No, not her life; that was dead, lost already—but another’s. ‘Oh, God!’ she cried as she fled through the darkness, ‘lay only one life upon him!’ And Heaven heard her. Where she passed she saw a light, it was in the chamber of a poor old widow who had risen from her bed where haunting visions on that night would not let her

sleep. Hither the poor, stricken doe turned for refuge, trusting the token Heaven had given ; here she told her testament ; here she hid the little one she could not live to nourish. Back she sped the way she came, a shadow of the night, that she might die at your door and curse you with her death. By the border of the copse within your gate she sank down in her weakness, no friend to raise her, no priest to rest her ; all unburied and unwrapped she lay out on the cold wet ground. They who had loved her to undo her did not tarry to give her sepulchre—poor Agnes ! I am but a rough fellow, sir, yet have I always taken it ill she had not a sexton. Oh, I lie, sir ? in my throat ? Ah, no ; would to God I did ! The dying do not lie. The good foster-dame who on her deathbed told me the pitiful tale, she did not lie ; Nancy Green, whom you have abandoned to misery, does not lie and does not forget ; motives do not lie, character does not lie, vengeance does not lie. Irene is your daughter—but she was not natural to this house, and her mother was not Agnes Vail. Sir, how like you my story ?”

What was the matter with Maurice Windham ? Years of ruffianly domination had made him never to doubt that mastery was his prerogative. But here he was baited in his own house, he was mocked by his own subordinate, without rebuke. He tried to rip and swear and strike down his jeering invector as cruelly as he had struck down many a rash fellow before, but he was dumb, he was cold, his thick sea-legs knocked unsteadily beneath him, he trembled like a cowed beggar before the mast. Hugh was right, the master had gone out of him, he was just a man. Was the tale he had just heard true ? Had that issue of his earlier, madder years, over whose fate he

had often wondered, yes, and wept, though no one knew it; whom, daring not to seek in his guilty knowledge, he believed to have perished on that fatal night—had that child then lived, was he perhaps grown a man, a lurking actor in that confederacy of fate that in a moment had turned upon him in his strength and was crushing him to the earth? What other handle might this insubordinate villain have against him? What more did he know? What could he prove? Had he the crew with him, tempted to conspiracy by promises of wholesale plunder—the devils, he had never trusted a beggar's son of them farther than his good right arm could reach?

“See!” yelled Hugh, seizing a heavy ewer from the table and dashing it against the wall. The panel where it struck crashed and fell in pieces on the floor, disclosing huddled pieces of plate and jewels within. “These are more lies, and these,”—striking another panel—“such innocent, little lies they never got into a bill of lading, such cheap, nasty lies, they were never marked for customs. They came in with Windham & Co., ‘carriers between New York and the Indies, Windward Islands and Carribean Ports;’ perhaps you know ’em, mighty shrewd house, credit A1, business all cash and no paper, starvation freights never trouble them, times always good; senior partner married lucre and the Co.—oh, perfectly silent, drowned at sea no doubt. They own one boat, a barkentine, slick in the run, with damned poor stowage, but it earns a power of freight somehow. Coming up coast she bears off after Hatteras and makes New York by the Sound, or sometimes she goes out by the Sound, but up or down, one way or t’other she’s bound to take it and lie to off New London o’ night to let the skipper ashore. Long way round?

oh, yes. Skipper crazy? No, by the gods, no! He likes salt air, sails for his health, wants to see his pretty daughter. Damme sir, these sea-dogs are a domestic lot!"

"What do you mean, you raving fool?" roared Maurice.

"Lies, sir, lies. I love your daughter."

"You love my money."

"So? By that token then I love her doubly."

"And if I gave her to you, what?"

"We'll be married and bid you to the breakfast."

" 'To the board that's spread  
Where crows have fed——' "

"Gods! A fulsome feast, I'm thinking. But I'll fetch her first and fare afterward," said Maurice, going from the room.

The great house was still as the graves of its departed dynasty, and the footfalls of its master, as he passed upon his errand, reverberated though the halls and echoed from every vaulted room.

At the head of the stairs there opened on the right a door, towards which Maurice Windham, hurrying by, glanced apprehensively; as the country lad, caught upon the road after dark, shies at the haunted hole, half doubting, half dreading the appropriate apparition will arise and confront him. Here, within this door, was the grand chamber of Windham House; here in a night of the wild and buried past, but no more forgot than yesterday, Maurice had last seen the beautiful Agnes pointing to the bleeding wound in her nursing breast and uttering the curse of recompense upon him, her devoted maimer. No spectral janitor stood at its door to-night, no gibbering sounds came from its

hollow corners within, all was as silent as the neglected sod out under the larch tree, but she was there, he knew it ; the Nemesis of her cursing presence had never gone away, never for a night ; and at last, at last her waiting ghost should be avenged and should be laid forever.

What profit had he gathered to himself in all the years of his life ? Riches ? Fie ! They were not his. He had hid treasure for others to find, his plunder was contraband, the title of all his miserly holdings for which he had sold honor, was passing from him in the hour against which he had hoarded them. He had lived by violence and in violence his life was going out. It was a fit conclusion. And he should perish seedless, unremembered, blotted from the face of the earth. The great passion of fatherhood burst upon him, it wrenched and shook his massive frame and drove the great tears bursting into his unaccustomed eyes. Oh, that there were someone in all the world to speak peace to him in this hour and carry him to a mourned grave ! Someone who lived by him and should live after him, that he might not wholly die. But there was none—only she he had disowned, the helpless quarry of the hungry ravisher, who waited even now to be gluttoned. Better he had murdered her body at the womb, as he had murdered her honor, than to have spared her for this incestuous vassalage.

Back and forth, in her room upstairs, paced Irene. She had heard the sound of the brawling below, and had guessed too well its meaning ; for Hugh's admiration for her had not been disguised. Was his passion honorable ? She hardly stopped to think of that ; all the sanction of law and church could not make his approaches less lecherous and loathsome

to her ; marriage could only be prostitution. Why did she feel so ? She did not ask herself, she could not have answered if she had. Hugh had been a man of fierce passions and an adventurous life, but these made him not less worthy a lover ; she would have spurned a courting thin-beard, whose heart, as temperate as a kitchen clock, did not burn and jump with his desire. Her lover must be strong and brave and fierce for her, and Hugh was all of these. He found her in dishonor and bondage, he would raise her up and give her womanhood ; she had been friendless, he would love her ; she had been hunted from the world, he would set her at large ; she had been weak and miserable, he was doubly strong and would defend her honor jealously—all this he offered her for love, and she sickened at him as at a bestial paramour—as Miranda at Caliban. Yet she, unconsenting, must be sold to him ! The senseless elements themselves should turn knights against such a sorry crime. Had maidenhood then no arms against its own defilement ? Yes. Her hand strayed to her dresser, it was not yet too late to check their purposes. But the cold steel sent a tingling shock through her as her fingers touched it, and she dropped it with a shudder. Better that her body be given to every debauchery than that her soul perish forever.

She thought of the great chamber down the hall, and the beautiful women, beautiful and pure as she before love kissed them, who once had lain in the high, canopied bed, whose damned and haunting spirits were there yet ; she thought of her mother, whom she had never known, whose blood was blotted upon the escutcheon of that pleasure-chamber. "Unto the third and fourth generation," she re-

peated, the words were as true as when they were pronounced from Sinai. God's wrath never defaulted. A doom was coming upon Doom House. It was hovering over it now ; the third generation was in possession, and she, the issue of the pile's peculiar guilt, she was the infamous fourth and last ; and guiltless as she was, she stood within the judgment. " Oh, Lemuel, Lemuel !" she cried, " save me from my mother's fate, save me from these men !" But there was no Lemuel. When he had been with her she had told herself she was strong for any resignation, and now, when she was quarried and suffering and only love was strong, she reached pleadingly out to him in vain. She was alone—perishing and all alone.

There came a rap at her door, a very gentle rap it was, not at all in the fashion of Windham House.

" What is it ?" she asked weakly ; she was so nervous and beset her own voice almost frightened her.

The door opened slowly.

" May I come in ?" asked the intruder, halting half way for indulgence.

Irene trembled. The story of the unnatural Cenci recurred to her and with it the affection of her father's greeting an hour before. She thought she had feared the worst but could it be a blacker fate was reserved to her ?

" Is it you, father ?" she asked, hoarsely.

" Yes."

" You may come, but shut the door, please."

Irene was standing by the window on the farther side of the room from the entrance. In the meagre light she seemed to Maurice like the vision of an angel, lingering till the resisting elements without should cease their contentions and she might fly away

to the blue heaven that awaited beyond the obscuring blackness. Her bed was unruffled and carefully laid, virginal as herself; almost he believed he saw Irene's spirit, manumitted at last from its unhallowed bondage, passing to its natural tabernacle, up in the eternal light. He had never been a dreamer of dreams or seer of visions before. His imagination had been as stolid as another's; but to-night he could not escape the uncanny people. Damning spirits had leered at him in the stairway, blessed spirits filled the room of his child and sanctified it. What was the witchery had conjured from him all his vaunting self-sufficiency and turned him to a fancy-strung boy? Cowardice? That was not a Wurdham trait. He had fronted death too often in his tumultuous life to balk at danger now. It was not fear nor the loss of his treasures, nor the abasement of his long authority; it was more than these, more than the great, crude fellow could understand. It was love reaching out for love, it was paternity crying for a child when the body is old and sterile and is resolving itself into the elements from which it was quickened. She had called him father, did she want love, too? "At eventime there shall be light,"—the curtain of darkness was torn away, at last he saw and knew, and the spirits he had feared came and comforted him. He put his arm around her and drew her to the window that looked out to the sea.

"Little one," he said, "can you tell me what the stars are saying?"

"Stars, father? there are no stars to-night."

"No stars? so, chuckie, so there're not; they're all put out, aren't they? But yet I can tell you what they're saying in their orbits away up behind the



clouds, for I'm an astrologer, René. They're saying your father's doom. Fifty-three years I've lived an undisputed villain till there has grown up in my ward a greater villain who is waiting to prove his paramountcy and vest himself with the succession and all my titles. I shall die a man, I shall defend my own, I wouldn't be Windham if I didn't ; but it it will be of no use, it is fated, I know it beforehand. This morning I was a bowling ship, to-night I'm an unweatherly hulk, robbed of my burden and my manifest ; an outlaw from every port and bonded to a buccaneer. Better to sink now than float a derelict like that. But the stolen moments are flying and I have something to tell you before I'm articted with the silent crew and the sky-s'l ship that bowls along astern. If my yarn seems too strange and monstrous to be true yet never doubt it, it is my gift to you because of death, all I can leave you, and dying men speak the truth. Many years ago, one night as black as this, Agnes Vail lay in the great room down the hall and cried with the pains of childbirth. She was a beautiful girl, only twenty and pure as the shyest virgin the sun ever browned until I cursed her. But she was not your mother. Her body was sown for tulips, not lilies. Your mother is wife, my wife ; go to her, love her as she will love you ; tell her I stole you away when you were born and told her a lie that you were dead, that I might inherit her fortune instead of you. I thought then she would die, God knows I did all I could to save her from it, but I thought there was no hope ; and you—you were a puny lass, I feared you would die too. I did not hate you, my daughter, I meant to bring you back and deal well with you, some day. But my crimes brought greater crimes to cover them, evil was a tyrant

over me, I dared not confess—and now my sin has found me out. Tell your mother I have confessed all and sent you back to her as the only recompense I can make; yes, tell her, in my rough, selfish way I've loved her, oh God! I have loved her and wanted to undo my wrong if I had dared. But I must be off, my adversary and yours is waiting, he will not wait long. If to-night you have a God, pray to him, I cannot save you: yet somehow, as I feel my own doom I feel you will escape. But if not—remember, daughter, that the stock from which you came were never cowards; kill, maim yourself, anything before you yield to this devil who is fretting himself for you." He tightened his strong arm about her and drew her closer, as a lover holds his best beloved, and so they kissed as they had never kissed before, in the meaning of their new yet old relation.

"Dearest father!" she said—but he was gone. Past the great chamber, down the creaking stairs he went to meet his challenger; but the way had no terrors for him now. Like the martyrs who made a Roman holiday, in losing everything he had won the greatest—peace; vanquished, he had won his greatest victory.

Hugh had not paused in his monotonous pacing up and down the dining-hall. "How says my lady?" he asked as Maurice entered.

"Modestly, as befits a maid," answered Maurice. "A grain of coaxing seasons any suitor; 'the willing doe flees'—you understand?"

"By the red hot devil, she shall not lack for seasoning! Is the job done?"

"Not too fast. And if it is, what are you going to give me?"

"The duty of a son."

“Of a sexton, say rather,” answered Maurice.

“They’re the same thing.”

“I knew it, fool, so I cleared her fair away for a port your navigation will never get bearings on—she’s in heaven.”

As the tiger from the jungle, wounded, bounds upon its prey, so with one long, savage howl of rage and pain Hugh sprang upon his burly mocker and bore him backward. “In heaven?” he cried, clutching his fingers into the old man’s throat and leering close to his face, “In heaven, say you? Then have I a mother there who’ll greet her and speak to her of me. My mother was Agnes Vail. Why was she Agnes Vail? Why wasn’t she Agnes Windham? Tell me that. Why was her child a nameless wretch, motherless and fatherless in the world, the foster of a poor widow who could spare little enough from her own lean store to keep the promise she made a dying woman? Do you know? Why did you brand the purest girl on God’s green earth with the infamy of your sin? Say why? You thought you could rape and rob and kill, and no one would avenge! You damned, double-dyed, ancient villain, I will avenge! My mother told you I would come when on that New Year night she suckled me with her hot blood that flowed down from her wounded breast; I sprung from her to live for her, my name is Vail, for I scorn yours; blood was my nursing, old rat! and blood shall be my meat!” Maurice’s face was turning purple, his eyes bulged out, he was falling backward, backward. Hugh laughed aloud. “Father!” he shrieked, “father, father, dear father!” and with the last cry he hurled the great, gasping form from him, a sailor’s knife plunged to the hilt in its bowels. It fell in a heap; he sprang upon it like a beast, he

stamped upon the head until it became a shapeless mass, he jumped upon the body until the bloody entrails oozed out and ran along the floor. Then taking up the reeking, hideous thing in his arms he crossed the room and hurled it out by the window. It crashed down through the branches of a lilac bush that grew outside and fell dismally on the hard ground. "Rot there!" said Hugh, hanging over it with grim satisfaction, "you gave my mother the burial of Jezebel and I'll put your carcass no deeper."

Tick—tick—the long, ogling clock in the corner hammered out the seconds with the vim of a smithy. Surely it had not croaked so lustily before its master died, but clocks always tick loudly at funerals. The terrible stillness cast its witchery on Hugh and made him forget his victim. His muscles, which had been so lately strained, relaxed; things which had hardly flitted across his mind since the days when old Mrs. Doane had thanklessly tried to give them lodgment there, came unwelcomed back to him. Five idle minutes already—surely so many the clock had told—he had been heir and master of Windham House and there was little enough time at best to be off with his inheritance before the carrion of his discomforted ancestor smelt abroad to the meddlesome crows who might dispute with him the offal. Was he a man or eunuch to be dawdling over a corpse that was dead as the Pharaohs, seeing strange visions when the prize was but half won and half enjoyed; when love, warm, rapturous, enticing love was waiting for him in her chamber, holding her nectar cup for his draught! An hour ago he had not been so temperate. Irene dead and cold? a stupid joke! he would quicken her. Awake, Hugh! shake thy-

self like the Nazarite and be thyself again : for one sweet hour drink the brimming cup you've earned and be drunken with the wine of love! What if your hands are red, so will love be the hotter : for Venus has ever been a ruddy goddess.

Hark! do spirits breathe? Are they not themselves breath, parts of the unsubstantial air? Hugh turned.

"What do you want here?" he demanded gruffly of the presumptuous intruder who, noiselessly as a specter, had entered the room and was standing by the door, watching him grimly and coldly. "You poor, masquerading sphinx, is it there are too many men in the world that you get in my way? If you have a soul, save it before I heave your guts to stink with the other poor fool's who's not yet cold. For I'm gentle to-night, gods! how gentle I am!"

But the stranger neither spoke nor moved ; words were silly weapons against him.

Hugh gauged his height, his reach, his great shoulders, his deep chest, his legs planted defiantly—they were good : he faced a giant like himself, between whom and him there lay no odds of wager. Oh, here was timber for a battle royal that might have graced the Roman sands ; and the imperial thumbs were down. The same madness was in them both, the guerdon of victory was equally precious to both, and death was its forfeit. Poor Irene, shall your lover or your brother rob you this night of your most priceless treasure? Put your fair hands together for your favored knight, for, however goes the battle, you will not escape the victor.

"Will you not speak?" roared Hugh, "have you no dying words to send—to her?"

"Hugh!" The stranger spoke with cold delibera-

tion. "This is the last time we shall ever meet. If you love life and fear hell, you'll tell it now. Come on."

As the taunted bull rushes upon the waiting matadore, so Hugh leaped upon his enemy. Not an ox could have stood against such an onset. Lemuel was driven backward and his chest collapsed with a grunt; he felt himself falling and all the room swam round. Powerless to throw off his antagonist, he clutched him like a drowning man; in that vice-like embrace they would fall together, and then let heaven decree.

But hold—a portent! Hovering over him Lemuel saw in that instant the spirit of his proud old grandfather. Was he then in Heaven? It could not be. Do not ministering angels, descending thence to this poor world, come to visit us in our extremities? Surely the spirits of the air were with him. He drew a deep breath, another; God's merciful air, how good it was! his body quickened, his strength rushed back with a bound. The spirit of his grandfather had vanished now but in its stead, out of his swimming vision two fiery points focussed themselves, glowering savagely above him. His antagonist was writhing in his grasp, powerless as himself in that fast embrace. Lemuel felt the floor with his feet, he had not fallen, all was not lost. With one supreme effort he threw Hugh from him.

Panting they faced each other as at the beginning. But only for an instant. Hotly as at first Hugh sprang at Lemuel—and was hurled reeling back. Down? no; just a little blood, dash it away and on once more! He's weaker, courage! the prize! the prize! who shall hold him? it's his—ugh! too short, another—Lemuel's arm flashes squarely to its mark

and Hugh is felled with a crash. He tries to rise and sinks back with a groan.

“Lem !” Hugh is calling him, he is reaching up to him. Lemuel sprang to his side. All their passions had been arbitred now, all their jealousies that had set them one against the other were determined ; the hatred which had darkened their lives vanished like the night and in its room burst the dayspring of love, the requickened love of their purer lives in the old, old halcyon days when no enmity had come between them and their heroics were limited by the traditions of a district school. “Old friend,” said Hugh, “give me your hand. We’re square at last, aren’t we, Lem ? say we’re square. You had to do it, you know, and I ain’t taking any grudge along to the other land. I lived long enough to lay my mother’s ghost and be revenged, the fates I was suckled with are fulfilled, it is enough ; I thought to live and be a blacker thing than the old skunk I’ve sent to perdition, so all the grace that is in Heaven could never have washed away the curse of my sin ; and you have saved me from it, it’s all right. But Lem, I loved her ; oh God ! as my own eyes, I loved her ; tell her that, Lem ; tell her I loved her long before I knew she was my sister, and when I learned the truth, how could I forget her ? perhaps ’twill make her feel kinder to me if she knows she made me love her. And ask her—stoop closer, Lem, put your hand under my head—ask her to sometimes speak of me in her prayers, it may help me to weather to that other shore where I’m not much acquaint. Hold me tighter, Lem, there ; it’s all gone now ; I was dreaming we were boys again and I heard the sucking of the water in Goggin’s wharf, perhaps we will be boys again, who

knows? just as we used to be—and Lem, promise me, the night is still young, the tide is still flooding, promise me before you go away you'll bury me with my mother out under the larch tree."

"I will, Hugh, I swear it."

"That's yourself, old man. And ask her—if she'll—just visit my grave before she goes with you—for she was my sister, you know. And when the dominie shall ask who gives this woman away, say I gave her, who loved her most, to the man who loved her best.—Good-bye. Be good to her, old mate. Good—bye."



EPILOGUE.

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OUT among the black shadows of Windham Close, where the goblins used to sport, a little funeral company kneels about a new grave. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust—the doom of Doom House has been fulfilled and all the damning spirits that haunted its grounds have been banished forever.

“Come, René,” said Lemuel, raising the sobbing girl at his side, “the last rite has been performed and there have been too many things done here this night for us to wait for tears; the tide is running out to the sea and beckoning us away, in two hours the dawn will be here, and by then we must be far in our flight.”

“I know it, Lem; take me away. Farewell, dear Hugh! oh, if we could have known the truth long, long ago, how different all might have been!”

The cocks of Trumbull Court are beginning to crow and across the sea peeps the first tinge of dawn. Over in Windham Close a lonely mourner, stretched upon the grave of her beloved, hears the strident heralds of the day that bid her like a ghost, be gone. “Good-bye, darling,” she moans, kissing passionately the coarse clods that covered her beloved, “we shall not be divided long.” And as the dawn is reddening she slinks away to hide herself in

some dark corner of the great, unwelcoming world. Poor, little Magdalen, Susie, so changed and sad ! no, you will not be divided long from your lover. There is no city of refuge for your broken heart in this prude, old world ; but there is room for you and him and all poor penitents in the beautiful land of Him who said, " Neither do I condemn thee."

THE END.

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